editor's choice

Vagabond

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 11

Eighth Edition

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English Edition

Vagabond Vol. 11

Story & Art by
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Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

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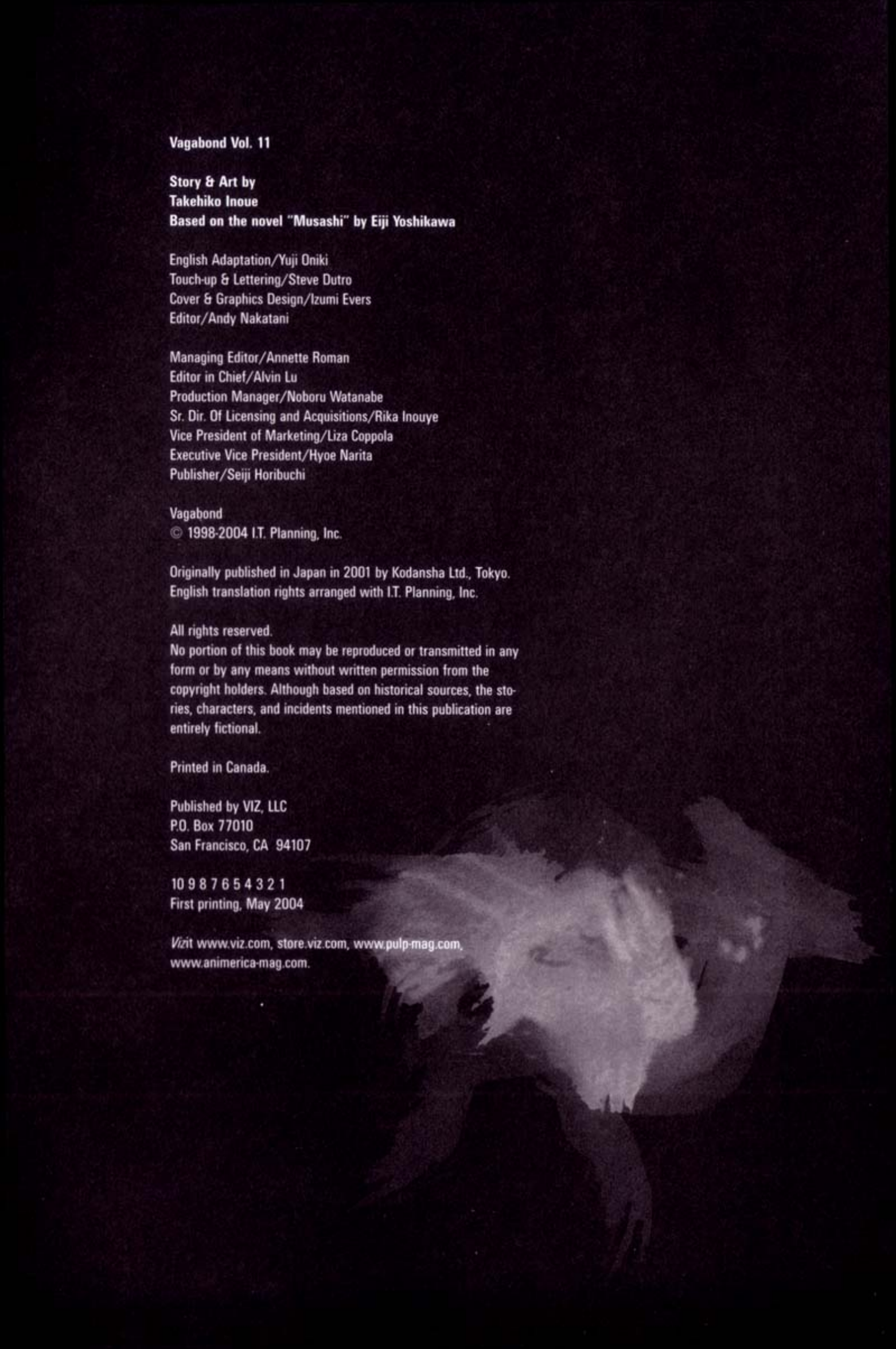
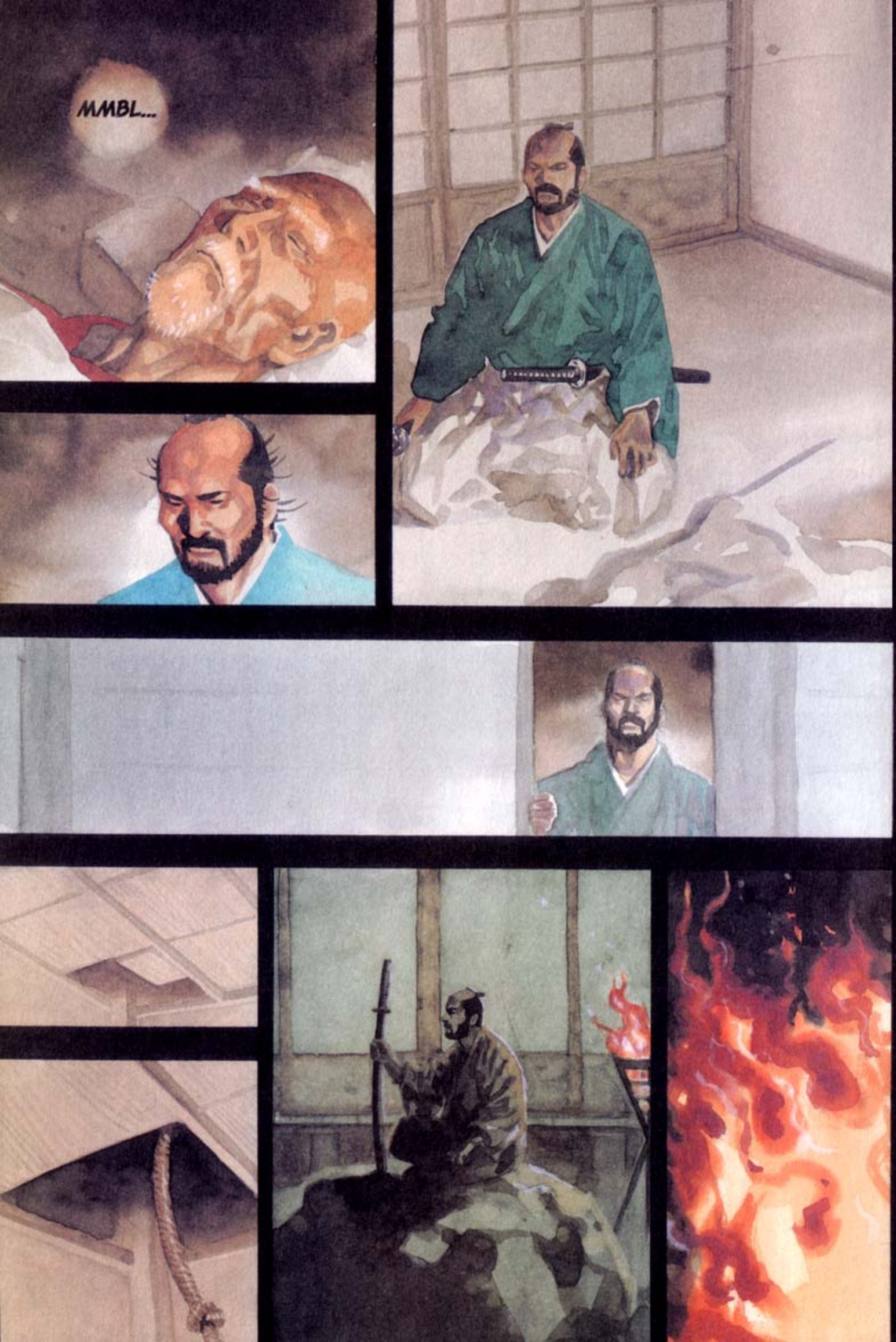



MMBL...

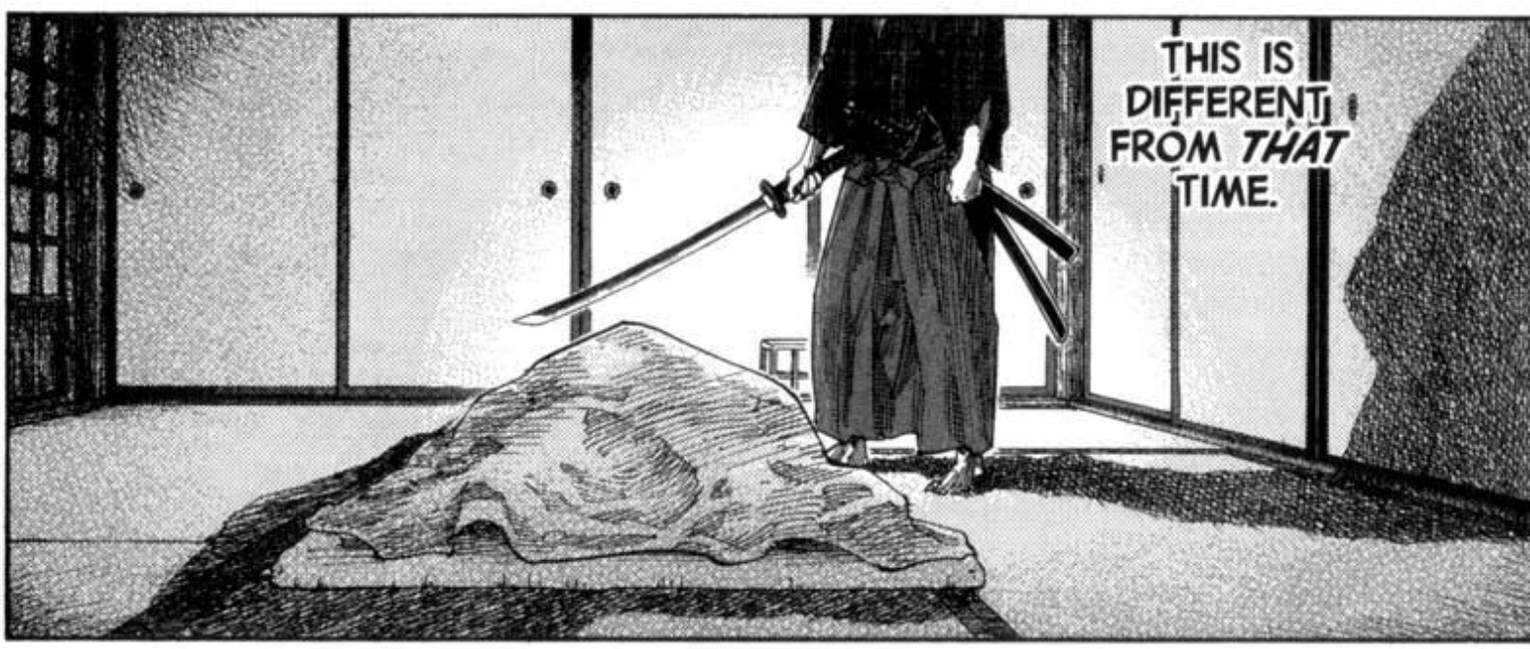
#98

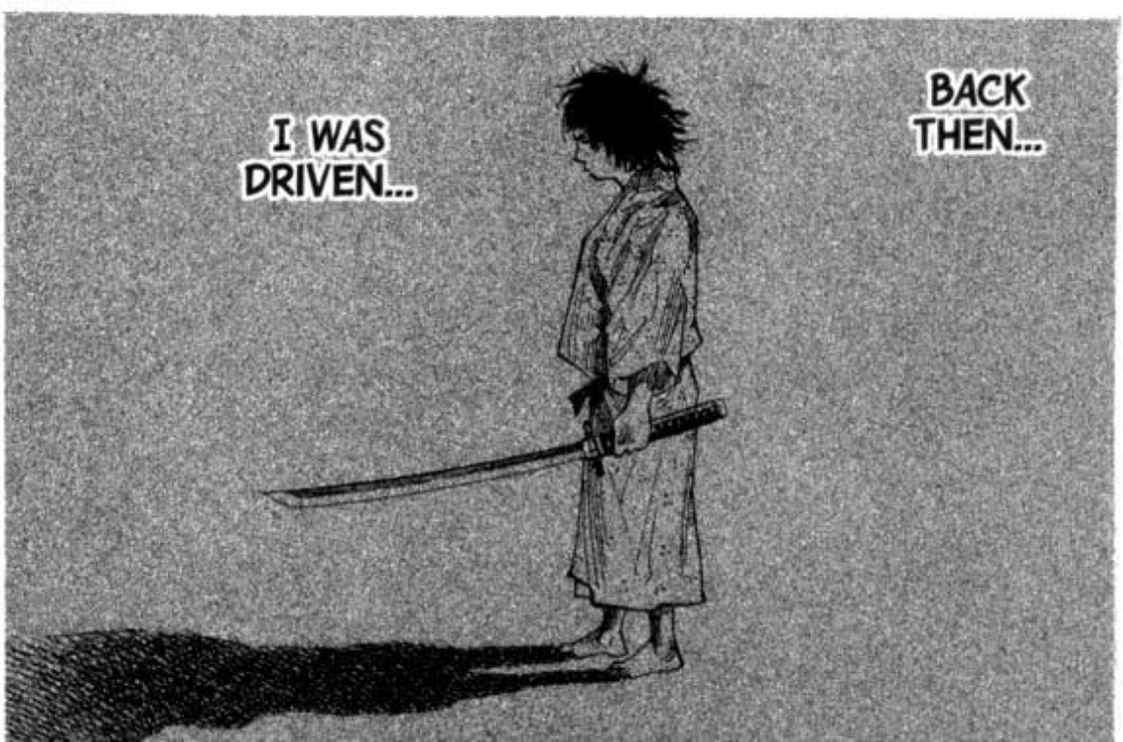
Unrivaled

SO THIS IS YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...

THE INVINCIBLE...!!
FSH

HE'S ASLEEP ...


THIS IS DIFFERENT FROM *THAT* TIME.

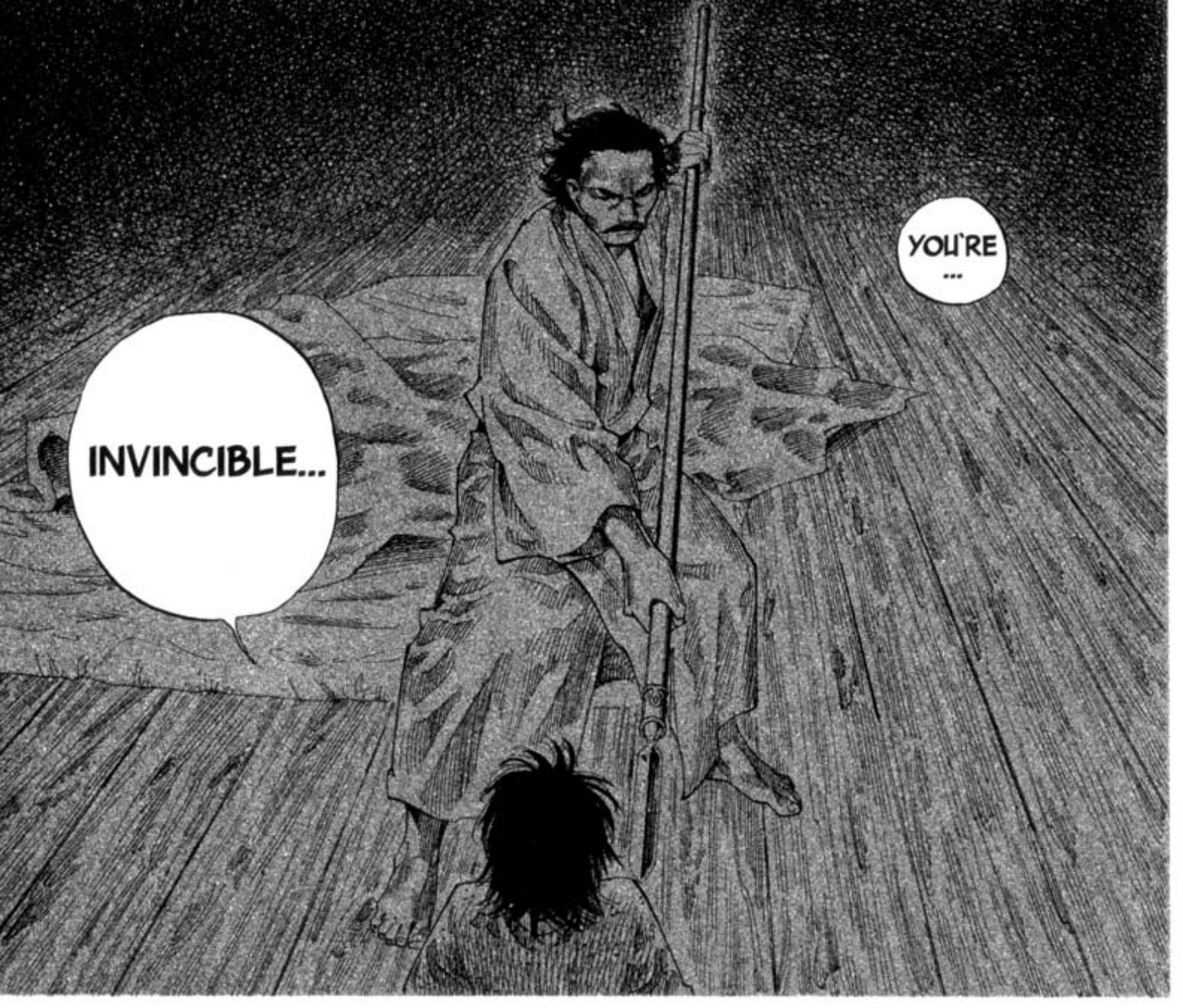

I WAS DRIVEN...
BACK THEN...

DRIVEN
BY PURE
HATRED.

FWIP

!!

WHUD
THOK
SO YOU THINK YOU CAN CUT ME DOWN.
TUNK
TELL ME! WHO AM I?!
THUNK
WHO AM I, TAKEZŌ?!
WHAT AM I?!
TELL ME...

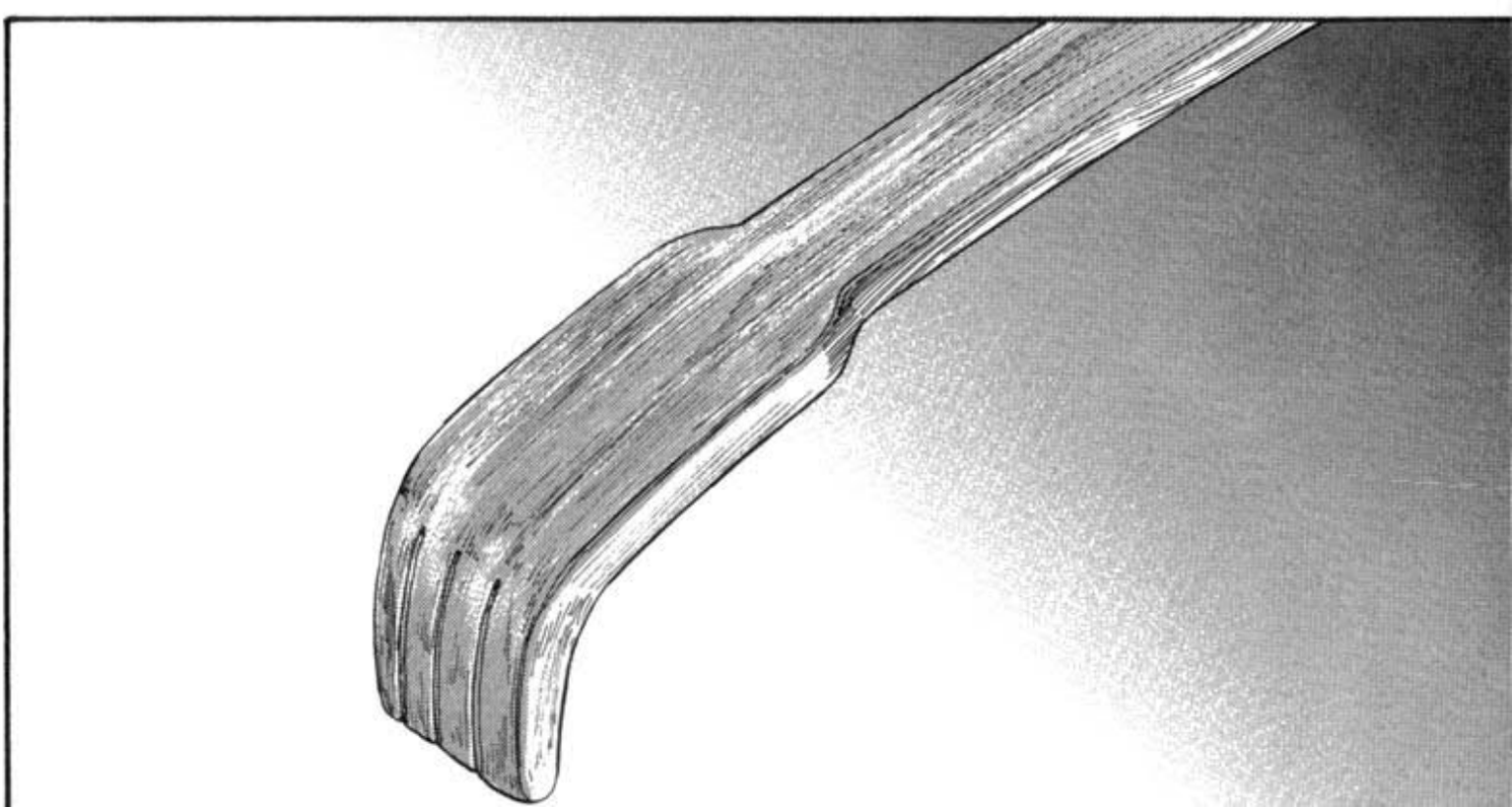

INVINCIBLE...
YOU'RE ...

...IS SLEEPING...
THE INVINCIBLE...

WOOSH

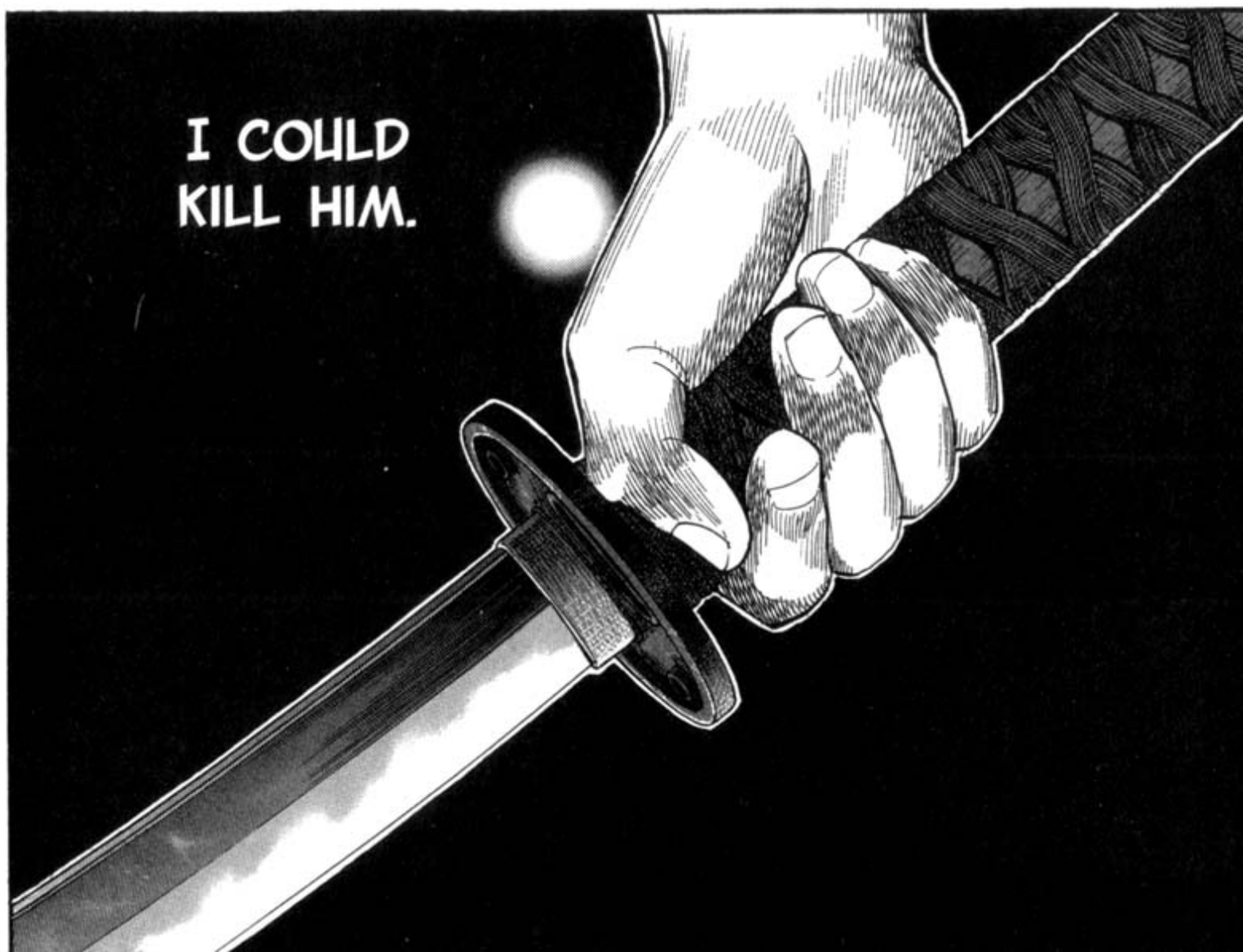
FP

!

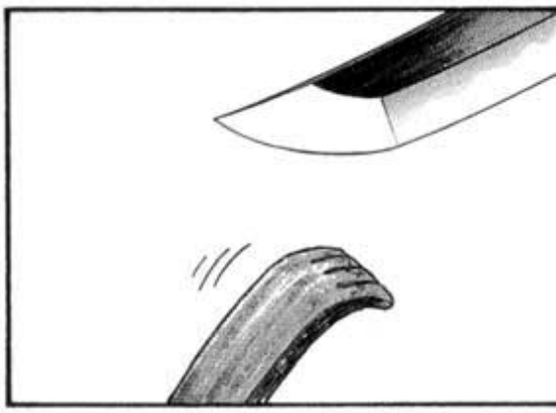


SKRCH
SKRCH
SKRCH
SKRCH

SKRCH
SKRCH


I COULD KILL HIM.

SKRCH
SKRCH
SKRCH
MUTTER MUTTER...



HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

Vagabond

〈Magonote〉

せなかを
かく道具

(MAGONOTE BACK SCRATCHER)

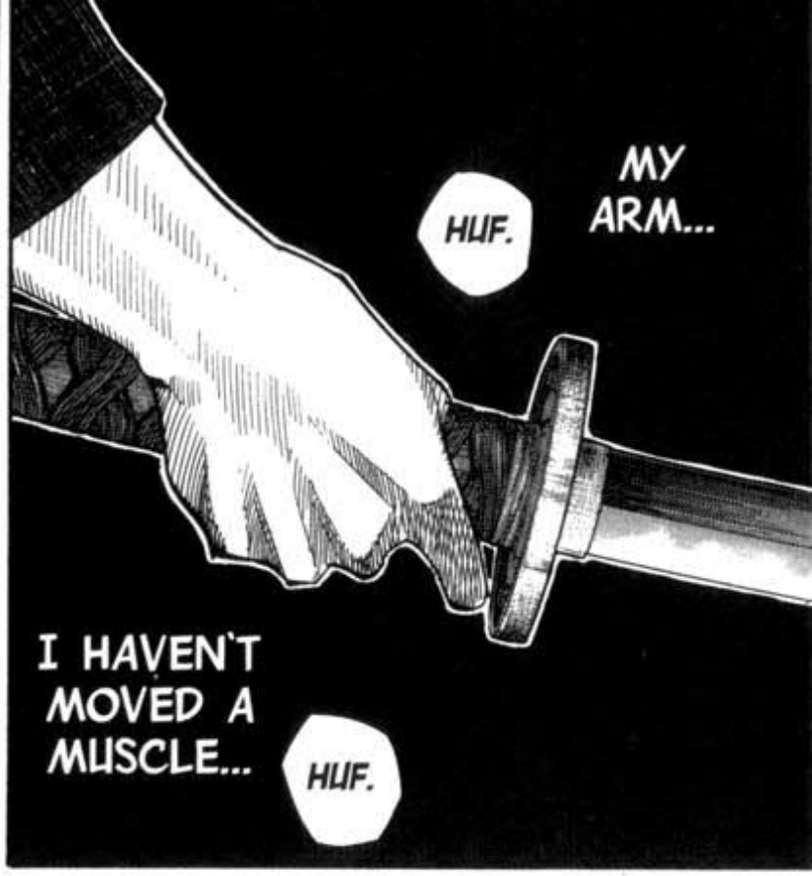
股間を
かくものに
あらず

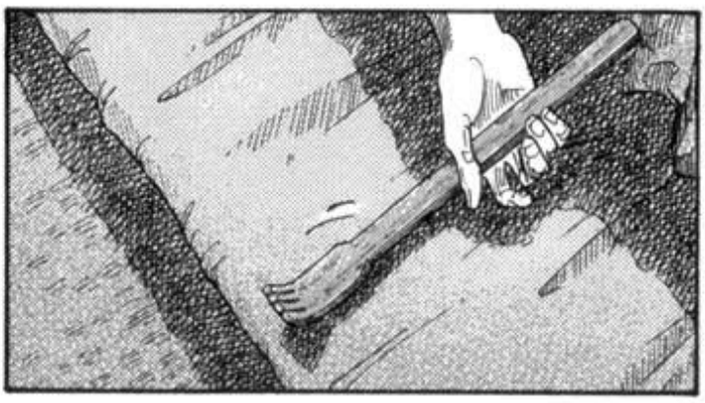
(INSTRUMENT TO SCRATCH ONE'S BACK,
NOT MEANT FOR ONE'S CROTCH.)

HUF.
HUF.
MUTTER...
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT...?!
HUF.
HUF.
LOOK AT HIM. HE'S TOTALLY UNGUARDED.
THAT WAS A COINCIDENCE...
HE CAN'T DO A THING...

#99 Son of the Invincible

MY PRESENCE...
HUF.
HUF.


MY ARM...
HUF.
I HAVEN'T MOVED A MUSCLE...
HUF.



MUTTER... MUTTER...
THIS IS NO TIME TO BE SLEEPING.

STOP PRETENDING TO BE ASLEEP.

HUF.
COULD IT BE THAT HE SENSED MY BLOODTHIRST?!
HUF.

HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
IF I WERE TO TAKE ONE SWING...
THEN THAT WOULD PUT AN END TO YOUR ERA, OLD MAN.

TUNK
?!
TUMP
TUMP
FWOOSH

THWOOM
!
IS THIS...
IS THIS ME?!

AN ILLUSION.
DON'T BE FOOLED.
DO NOT BE DISTRACTED.
YOU ARE MY SON.
THE SON OF THE INVINCIBLE.
I AM THE MIGHTIEST OF ALL.

.....

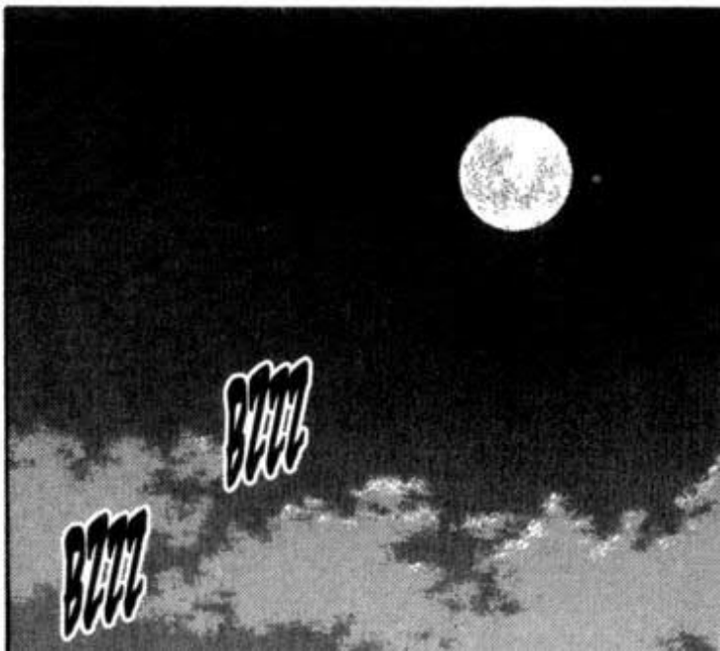
KEMPŌ WON ONE BOUT AGAINST ME--QUITE AN IMPRESSIVE FEAT.
HE DOES INDEED MERIT THE TITLE, "UNRIVALED THROUGHOUT THE LAND."
YOSHIOKA KEMPŌ OF KYOTO...

AFTER THAT FIRST ROUND, I WON TWO CONSECUTIVE ROUNDS AGINST KEMPŌ.
THE SHŌGUN HAD NO CHOICE *BUT* TO RECOGNIZE MY GREATNESS !!
OF COURSE ...
...I'M JUST A COUNTRY BUMPKIN FROM SAKUSHŪ. I COULDNT HELP BUT BE A BIT NERVOUS IN KYOTO...
...WHAT WITH FIGHTING BEFORE THE SHŌGUN AND ALL.

HEH HEH...
"MARTIAL ARTIST-- INVINCIBLE UNDER THE SUN!"

INVINCIBLE...

BZZZ
BZZZ


BZZZ
BZZZ

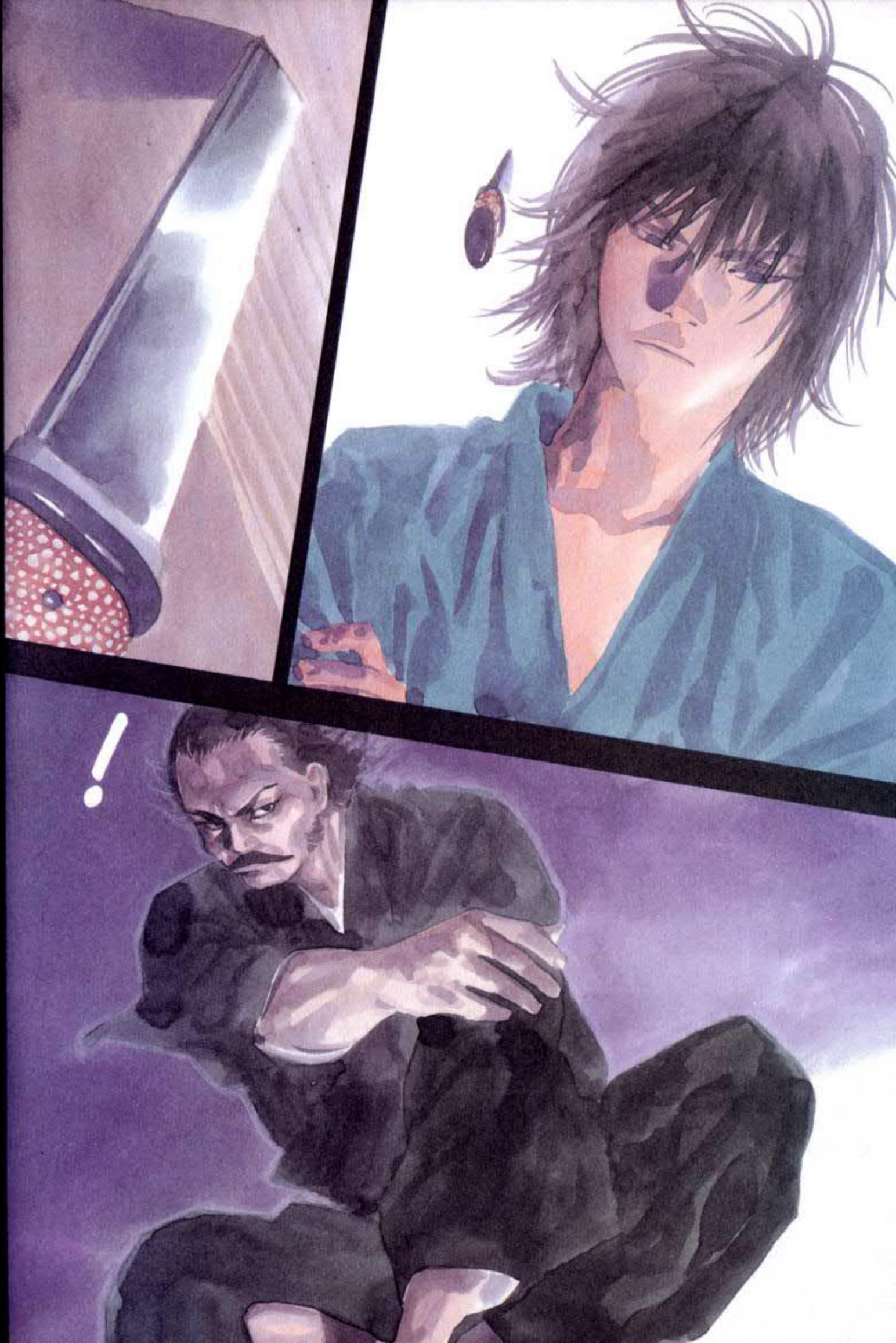
WHY DO I WANT TO BECOME INVINCIBLE?
TELL ME, OLD MAN...

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE INVINCIBLE...?!
FSH

Vagabond

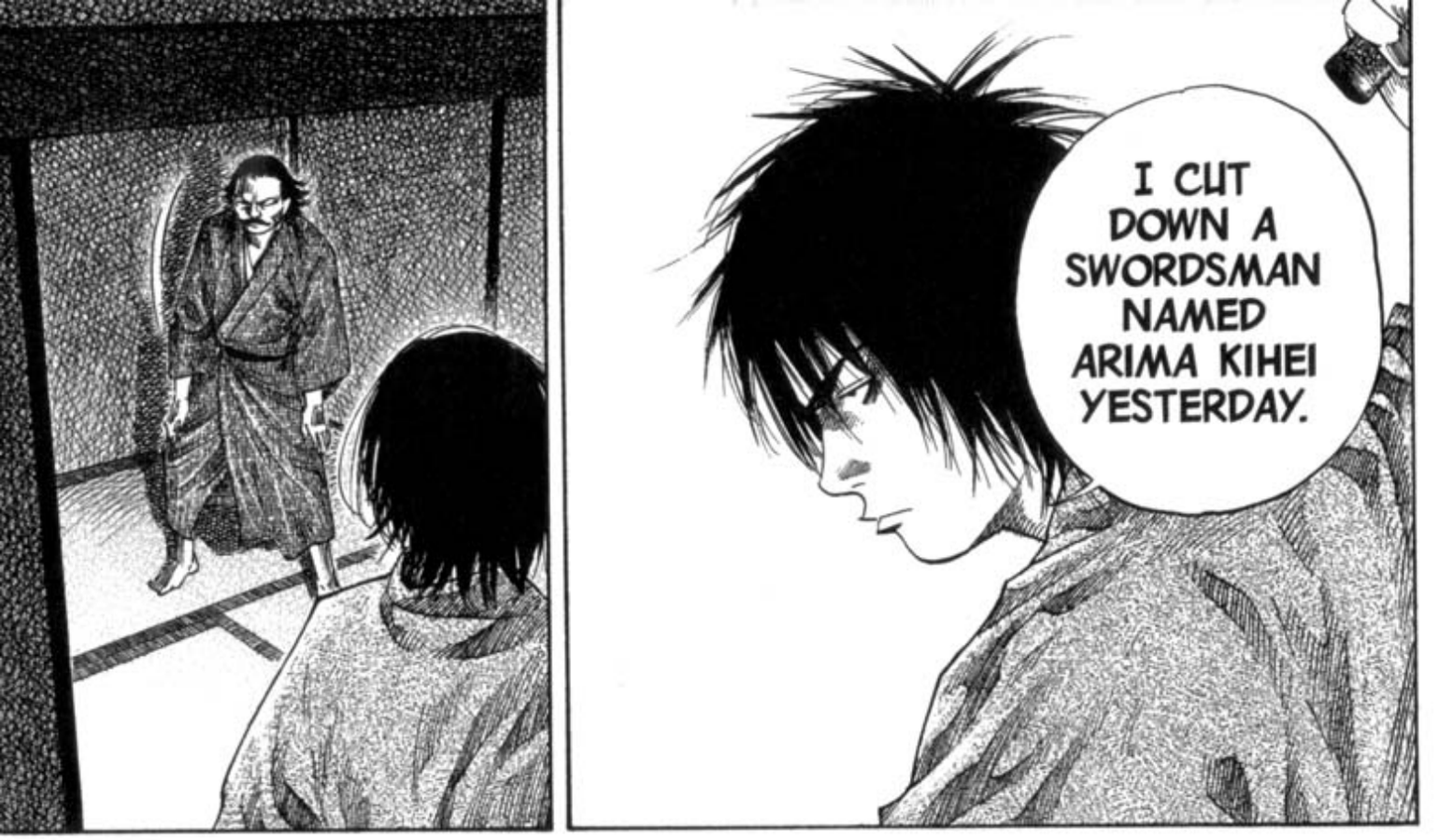
HEY...
...DON'T YOU DARE LOOK DOWN AT ME, YOU RUNT.

#100
The Real Thing



TUGG

FWICH


I CUT DOWN A SWORDSMAN NAMED ARIMA KIHEI YESTERDAY.

I'M NOT A KID ANYMORE.

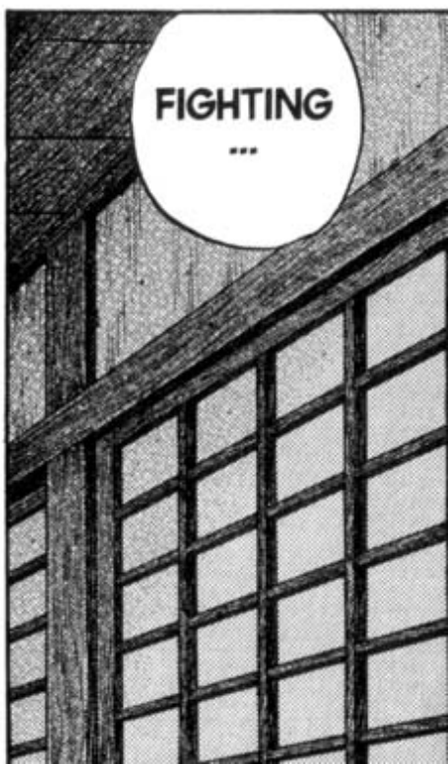
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE INVINCIBLE...?

HOW CAN YOU SLEEP?

CUT OFF THE HEAD OF THE CLAN AND I WIN, RIGHT?
I SINGLE-HANDEDLY TOOK ON THE ENTIRE CASTLE AND I'VE MANAGED TO COME THIS FAR...
HOW CAN YOU SLEEP?

KRAKL
KRAKL

THE WAY OF THE SWORD...

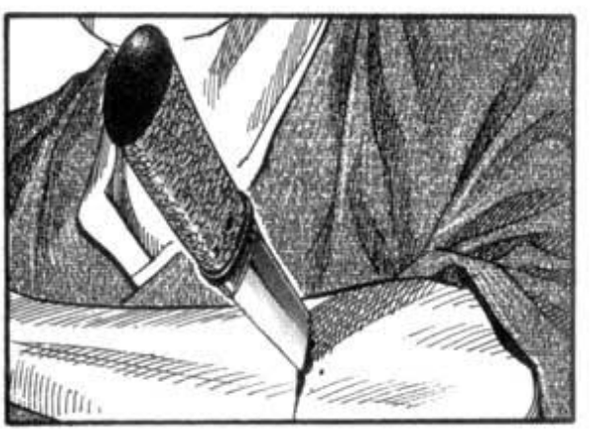

FIGHTING ...

TO BE INVINCIBLE...
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
KILL OR BE KILLED-- THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT, ISN'T IT?
.....
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

IN`EI?!
"SWIMMING IN THE MIDDLE OF AN OCEAN..."
HRMPH.
MMBLE...
"...ONE CAN NEVER REALIZE HOW VAST IT TRULY IS..."

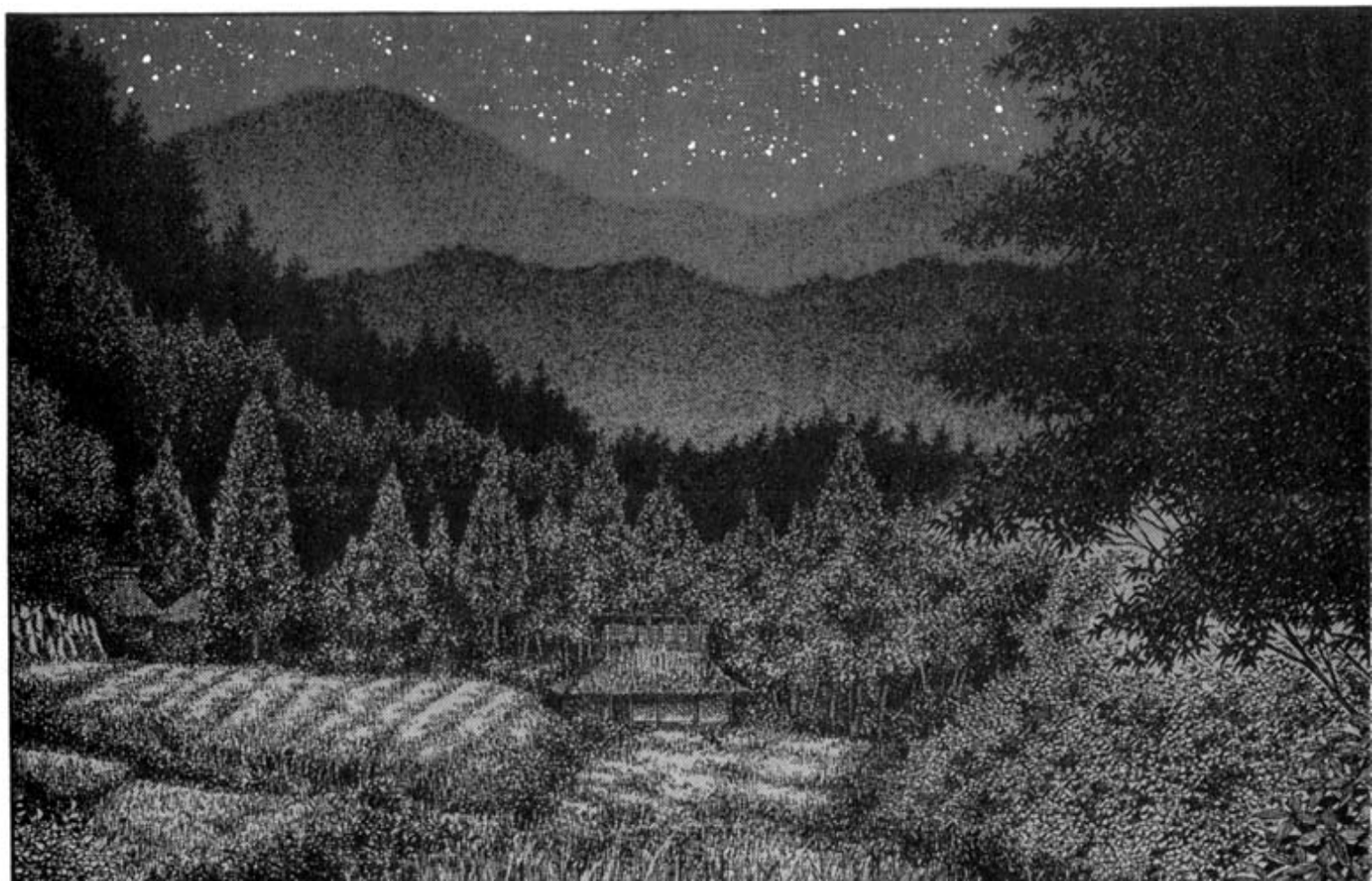
SHUK

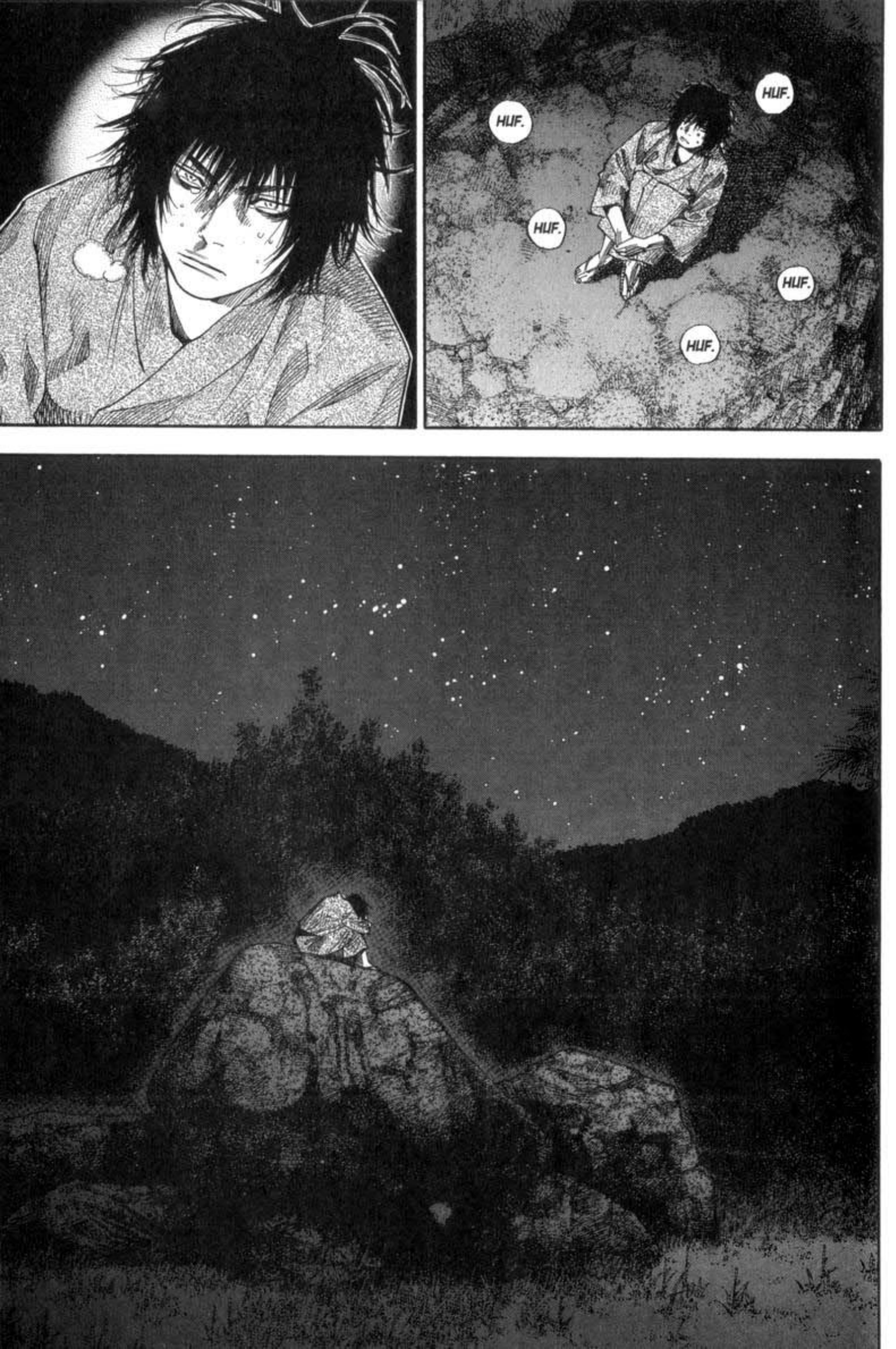
FWIP

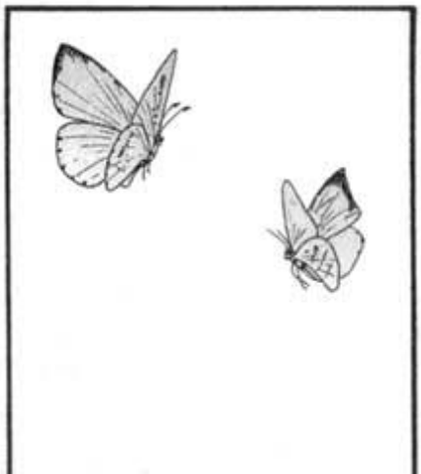


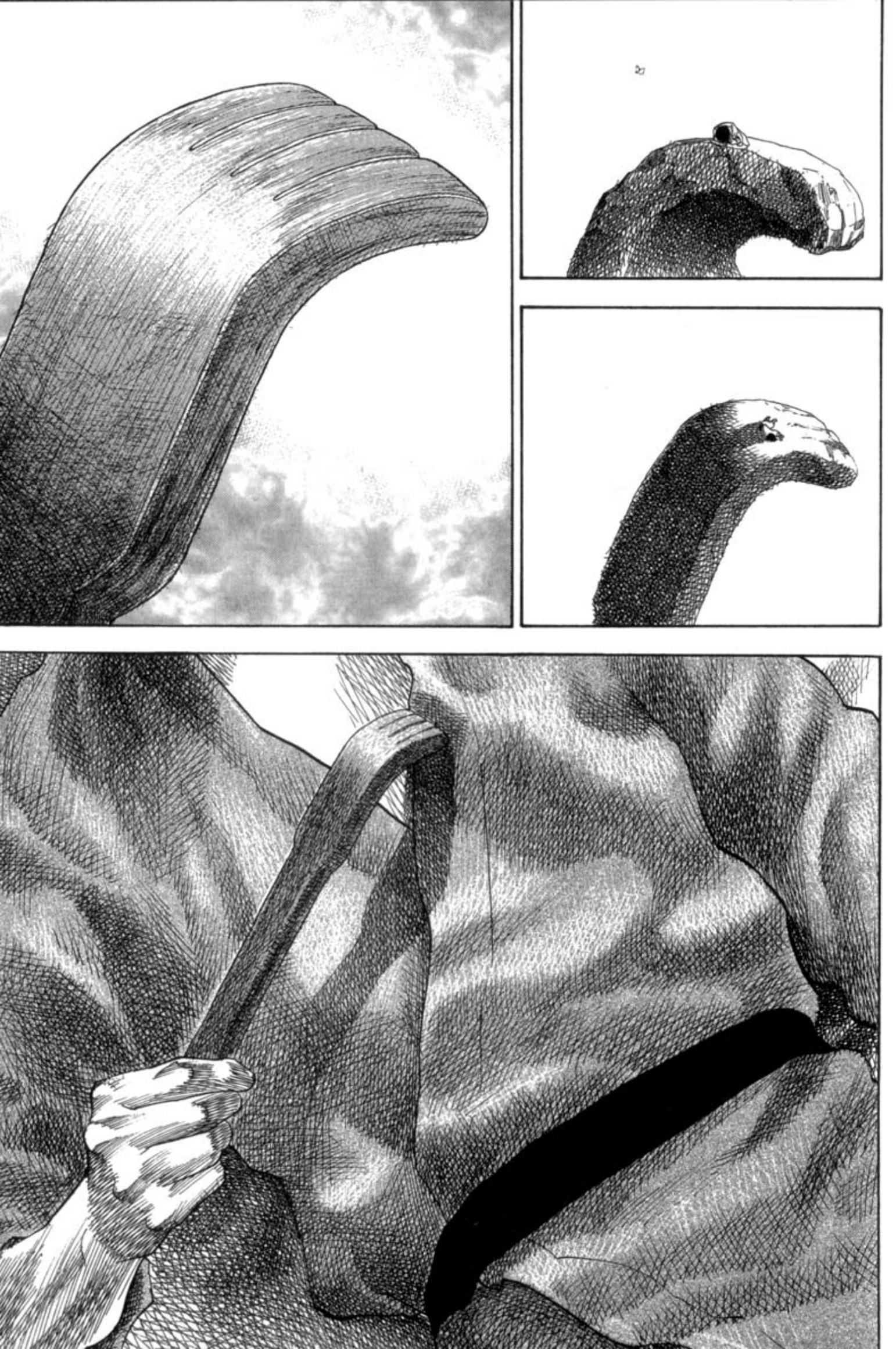
TMP

HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

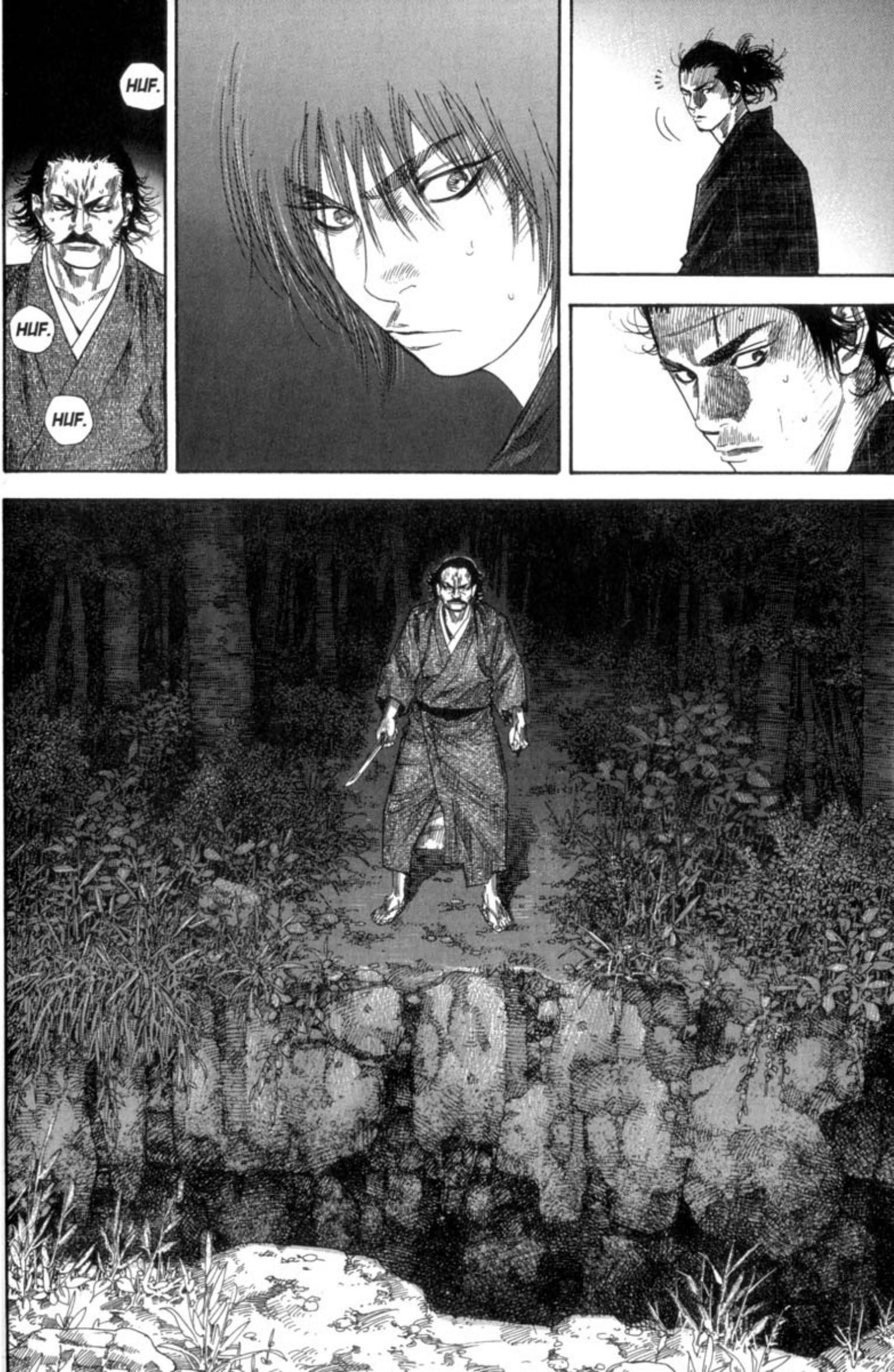



HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.





HE'S A COLOSSAL MOUNTAIN...
THIS MAN...
SKRCH
SKRCH


HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

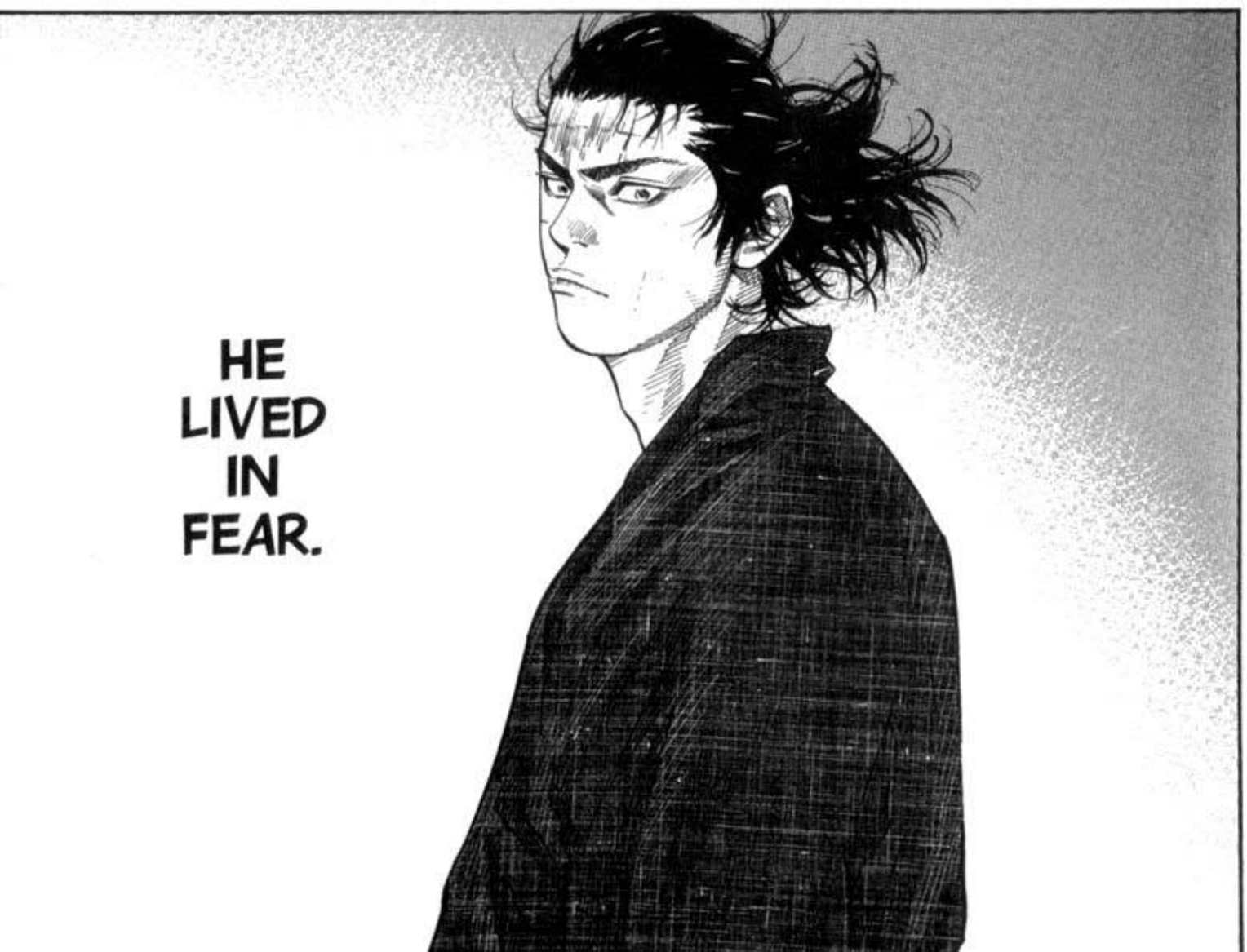
#101 Blue Sky

FSSSSH
HH

FSSHHH
KKOOOH
I AM INVINCIBLE!
KKOOOH

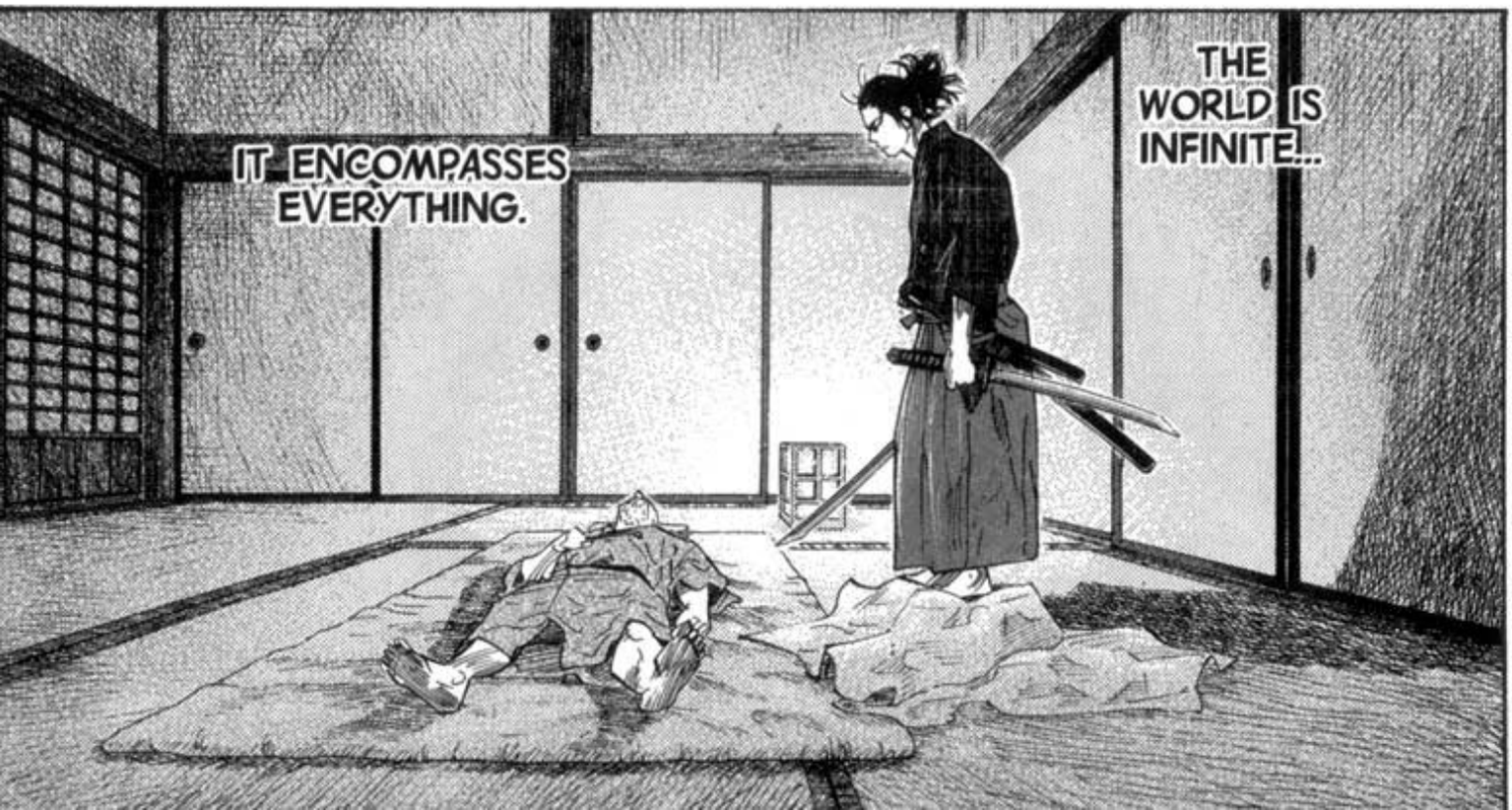
HMM...
THAT MAN...

FWOOM
INVINCIBLE!
FWOOM
NO ONE IS MY EQUAL! I AM MUNISAI!!


HE LIVED IN FEAR.

HAUNTED BY HIS OWN NAME-- MUNISAI "THE UNEQUALED."
HAUNTED BY HIS TITLE--"THE INVINCIBLE."
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HE CLOSED OFF THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD AROUND HIM.

"YOUR OWN BLOOD-THIRST..."
"...TURNS EVERYONE YOU ENCOUNTER AGAINST YOU."
HE EVEN SHUNNED AND FEARED HIS OWN CHILD.


IT ENCOMPASSES EVERYTHING.
THE WORLD IS INFINITE...

FATHER...
THIS MAN IS THE REAL THING.

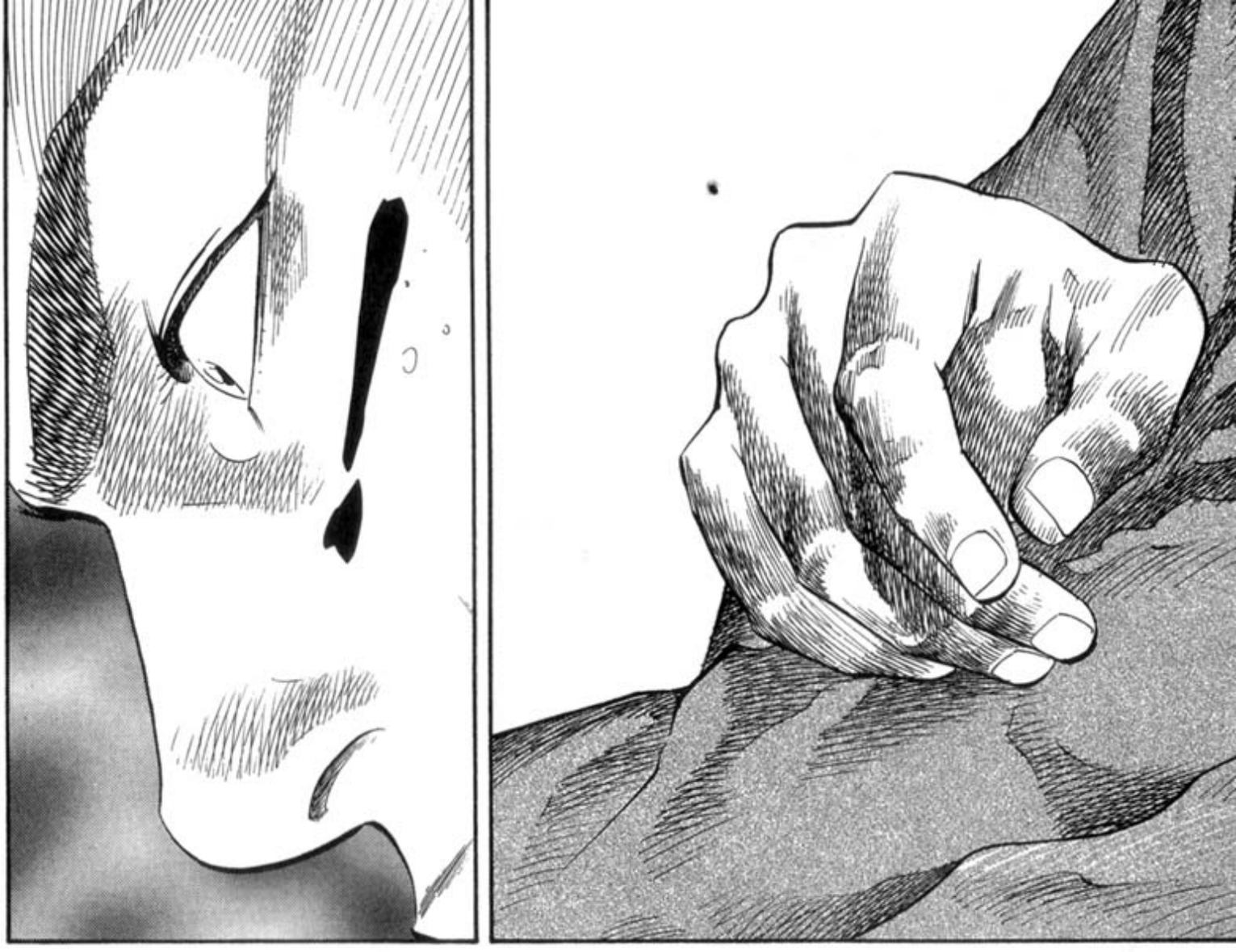
FWOOM
I'M THE ONLY ONE...
I AM INVINCIBLE !!
INVINCIBLE...

MUNISAI
THE
UNEQUALED
!!

"YOU ARE
THE SON
OF THE
INVINCIBLE!"

INVINCIBLE...
YAGYŪ
SEKISHŪSAI
...!!

FWOOM
I CAN KILL HIM!!
JUST STAB HIM IN THE THROAT!
HOW CAN YOU SLEEP?!
THAT BACKSCRATCHER WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD!!



WHAT HAPPENED TO IT?

TMP
?!

FWUMP
FWOM

…!!

HAH!

SO...
...HE WASN'T ASLEEP...!!
!
HMM...
YES...
I'M IN MY PRIME.
AND IT'S ONLY NOW...
...THAT THE WORDS OF MASTER ISE ARE APPROPRIATE FOR ME...

MY SWORD...
...IS ONE WITH HEAVEN AND EARTH.

MUSASHI FELT STIFLED, AS IF HE WERE BEING CRUSHED...
HE WANTED TO RUN AWAY...
BUT AT THE SAME TIME...

MUSASHI ALSO WANTED TO STAY BY THE OLD MAN'S SIDE FOREVER.

HE LIKED THIS OLD MAN.
HYŌGO?
WHO'S THAT?
THIS ISN'T VERY AMUSING, HYŌGO.
COME NOW...
...?!
MUSASHI FOUND HIMSELF FEELING CONFLICTED.
.....
NOT AWARE OF HIS SURROUND-INGS...
HIS EYES ARE GLAZED OVER...
HE'S ILL AND BEDRIDDEN...

NOW THEN, IT'S MY TURN.
FWP
CHAK
GASP!

ARE YOU READY?
HEH HEH.
!!
NOW THEN, HYŌGO, HOW WILL YOU COUNTER THIS?

#102 The Infinite Universe

!

FWISH

?!
WHUNK
HM...?
UMF?!
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

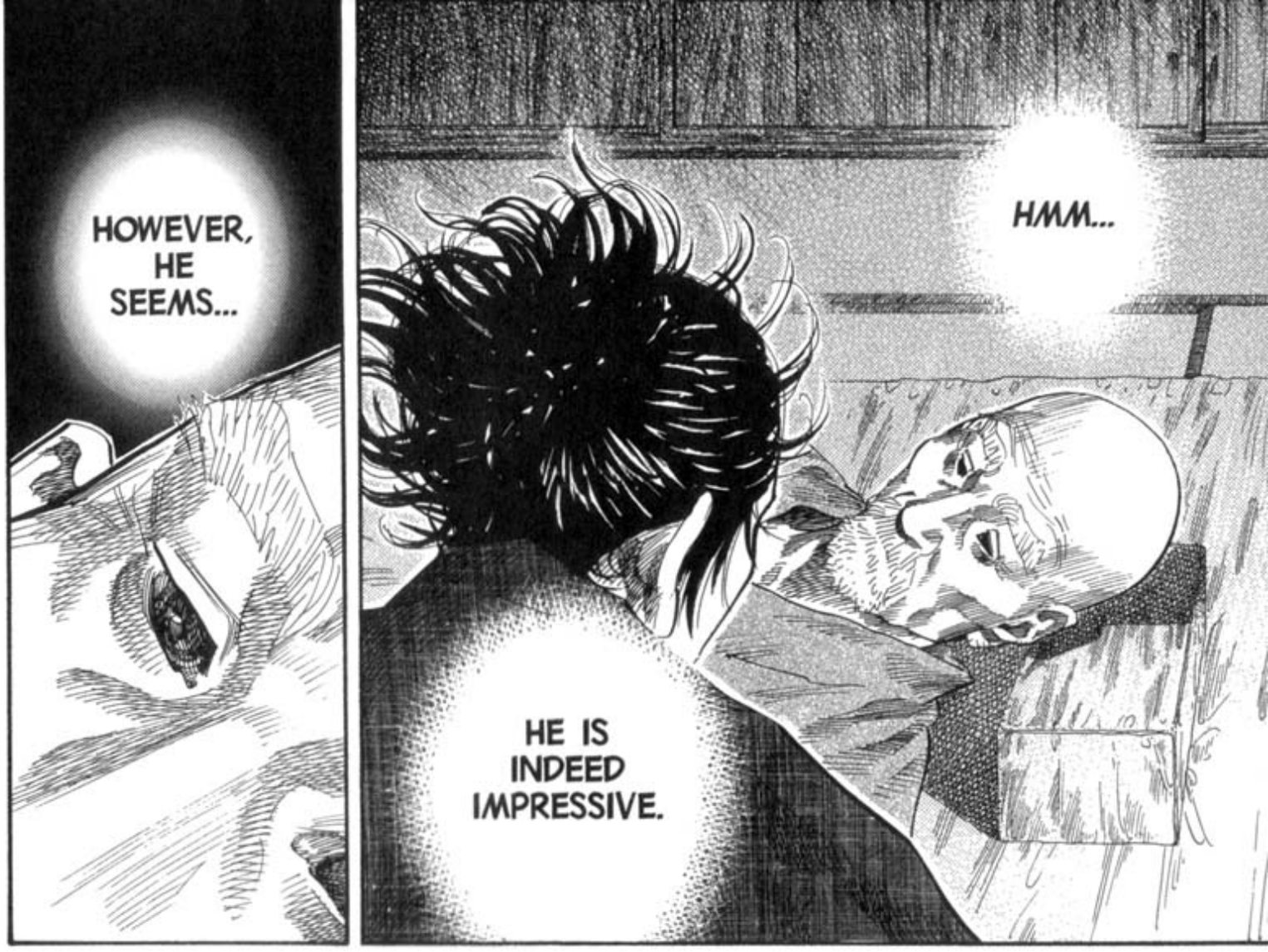
.....
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
WHO ARE YOU?

FICH
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

I SHALL RETURN...!!
.....
HUF.
HUF.
IT'S BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE I LEFT MY VILLAGE...
I'VE EXPERIENCED A NUMBER OF FORMIDABLE FIGHTS...
I WAS CONVINCED I WAS MAKING PROGRESS...
...HOWEVER...

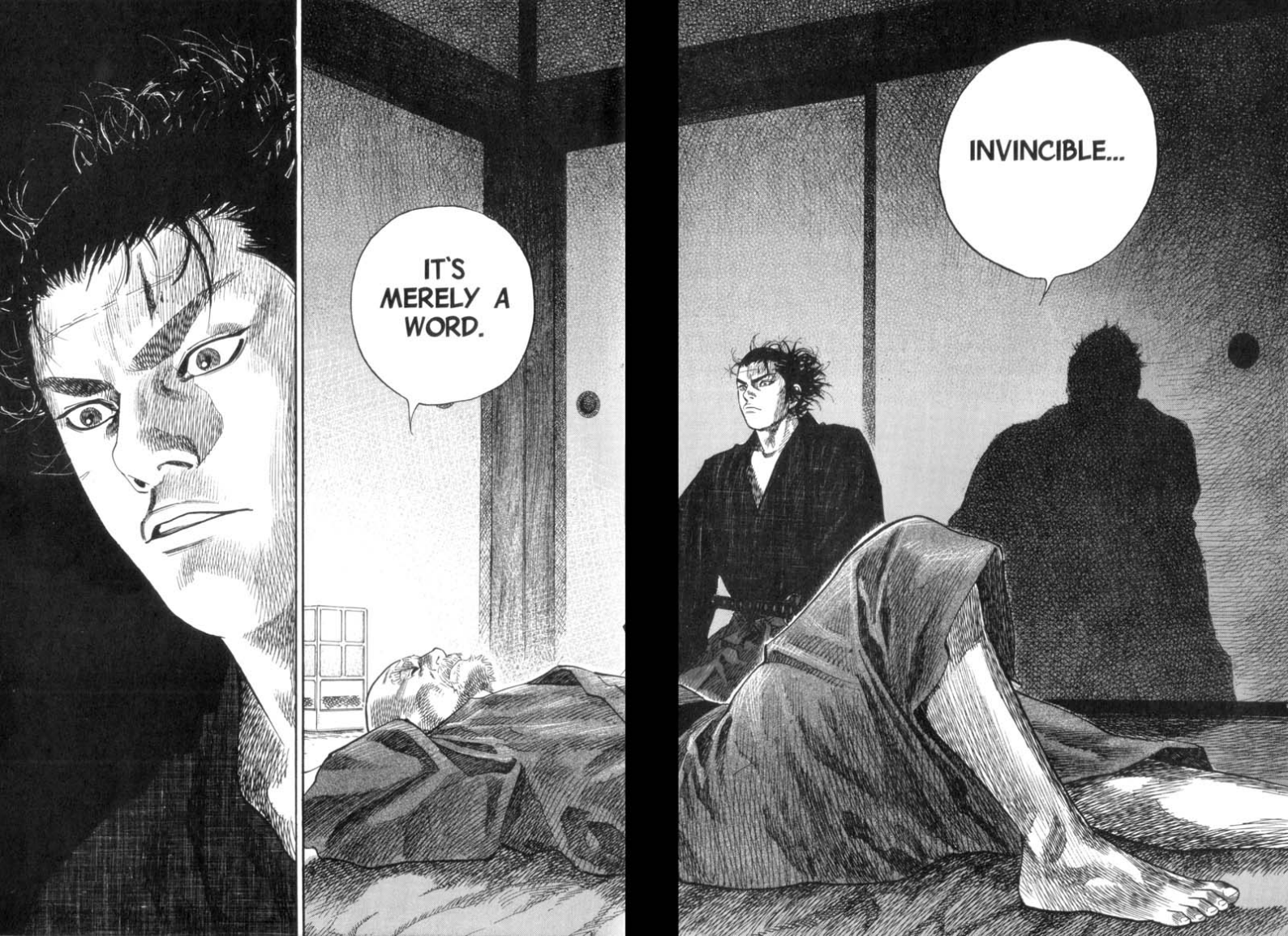
IN COMPARISON TO THE GRANDNESS...
...OF THE INVINCIBLE YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...
...I AM NOTHING!!

COME NOW. NO NEED TO BE SO FORMAL.
.....
HMM?
TO BE *INVINCIBLE* ...
RIGHT NOW, I'M INCAPABLE OF UNDER-STANDING WHAT THAT REALLY MEANS...
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, YOUNG MAN?
I AM MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, A RŌNIN FROM SAKUSHŪ.
SO *HE'S* THE ONE.
OTSŪ'S CHILDHOOD FRIEND...
GASP!
SAKUSHŪ ?!
HMM... WHERE'VE I HEARD --?


HOWEVER, HE SEEMS...
HMM...
HE IS INDEED IMPRESSIVE.

DANGEROUS...

.....
FICH
FICH
FICH
I HEARD SOMETHING.
YES, SO DID I!!
COULD IT BE MUSASHI ?!
.....
MUSASHI...
.....
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE INVINCIBLE ...?


IT'S MERELY A WORD.
INVINCIBLE...

ZHOOSH

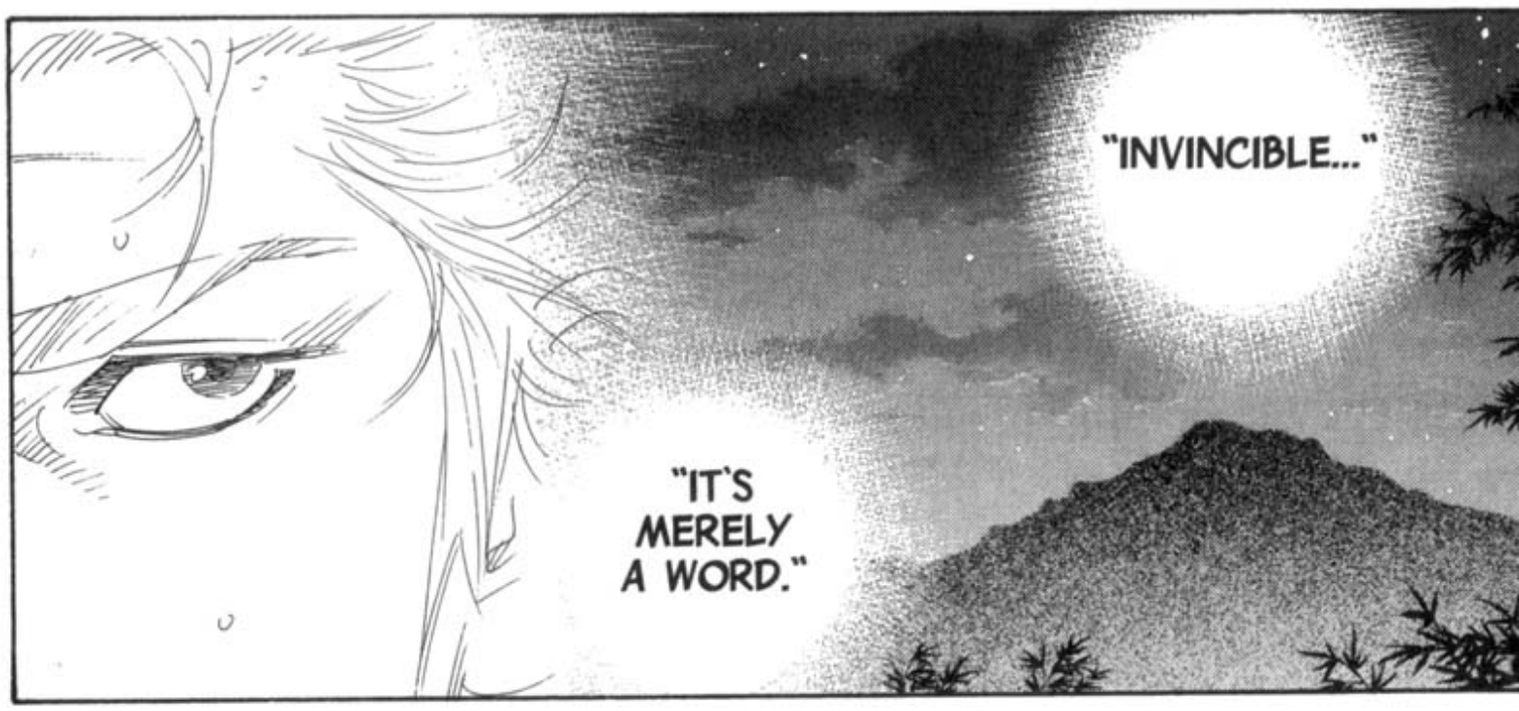
YOU STILL HAVE A WAYS TO GO, SHŌDA.

...!!

FWOOSH
MASTER !!
HEH HEH HEH!
HUH ?!
!!!
I HAD AN AMUSING ENCOUNTER.

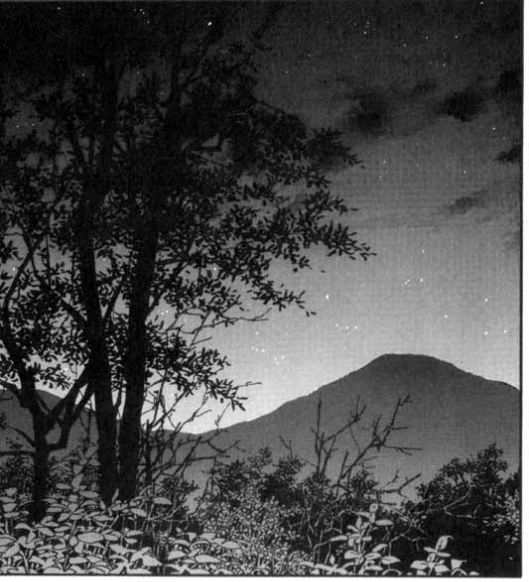
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

"...MERELY A WORD."
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
FICH FICH FICH
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.


"INVINCIBLE..."
"IT'S MERELY A WORD."

TO BE "INVINCIBLE."

THE MORE YOU THINK ABOUT IT...
THE MORE YOU SQUINT YOUR EYES IN DESPERATION TO SEE...
...THE MORE OBSCURED THE ANSWER BECOMES.
"IF SOMETHING'S TOO OBSCURE TO SEE..."
.....
"THEN TRY CLOSING YOUR EYES."
"WELL...?"



DO YOU SEE HOW INFINITE YOU ARE?

OTSŪ...!!

Vagabond

しょうだ、庄田

(SHODA'S FEELING DISGRUNTLED.)

SHŌDA WILL DO RIGHT BY HIM.
HE'LL BE OKAY...
IF HE GETS CAUGHT...
FICH
WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO JŌTARŌ...
FICH
FICH
AND BESIDES, THE YAGYŪ WILL PROBABLY TAKE BETTER CARE OF HIM THAN I EVER COULD.
DEFEAT...

FICH
FICH
THAT'S ALL IT TOOK FOR ME TO LOSE MY NERVE.
THAT OLD MAN DISPLAYED ONLY AN INSTANT OF BLOODTHIRST...

FICH
FICH
I WENT IN PREPARED FOR A TRUE BATTLE.
BUT I WAS UNABLE TO LEAVE MY LIFE BEHIND...

FICH
THE OLD MAN'S WORDS ARE BEYOND ME.
I WASN'T ABLE TO COMPREHEND THE TOTALITY OF HIS POWER...
...DID I RECOIL IN FEAR WHEN HE WAS JUST PLAYIING AROUND...?

"...THE MORE OBSCURED THE ANSWER BECOMES."
"THE MORE YOU SQUINT YOUR EYES IN DESPERATION TO SEE..."
"DON'T THINK..."
...
!!
!!!!

WHAT DID I GAIN FROM COMING HERE TO THE YAGYŪ?
FICH
FICH
NOTHING...

#103 Farewell at Dawn

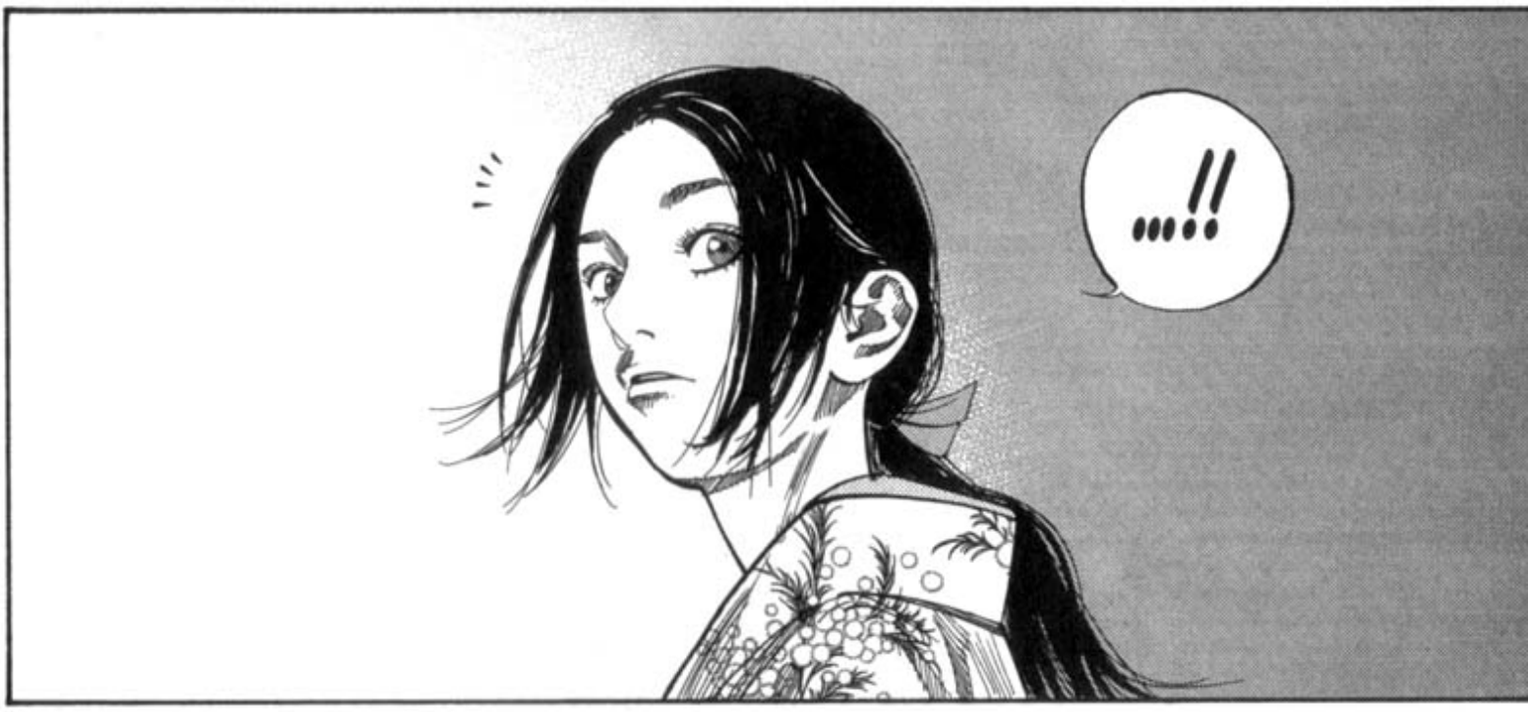
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?
OTSŪ!!
THMP TMP
...ALL NIGHT?
HAVE YOU BEEN WAITING...
FOR ME...?
...FOR ME?
YOU'RE WAITING...
THMP TMP

...BUT YOU'VE PACKED YOUR THINGS AND YOU'RE READY TO TRAVEL...
THERE'S STILL A LONG TIME BEFORE SUNRISE...
AND YOU'RE WAITING FOR ME!
THMP
THMP

I WANT TO TAKE HER WITH ME...

HER FACE...
I WANT TO TOUCH THAT FAIR FACE.
I WANT TO TAKE OTSŪ WITH ME...

HELP!!!


...!!

JŌTARŌ?!

SOMEBODY!
HELP!!!

GASP!

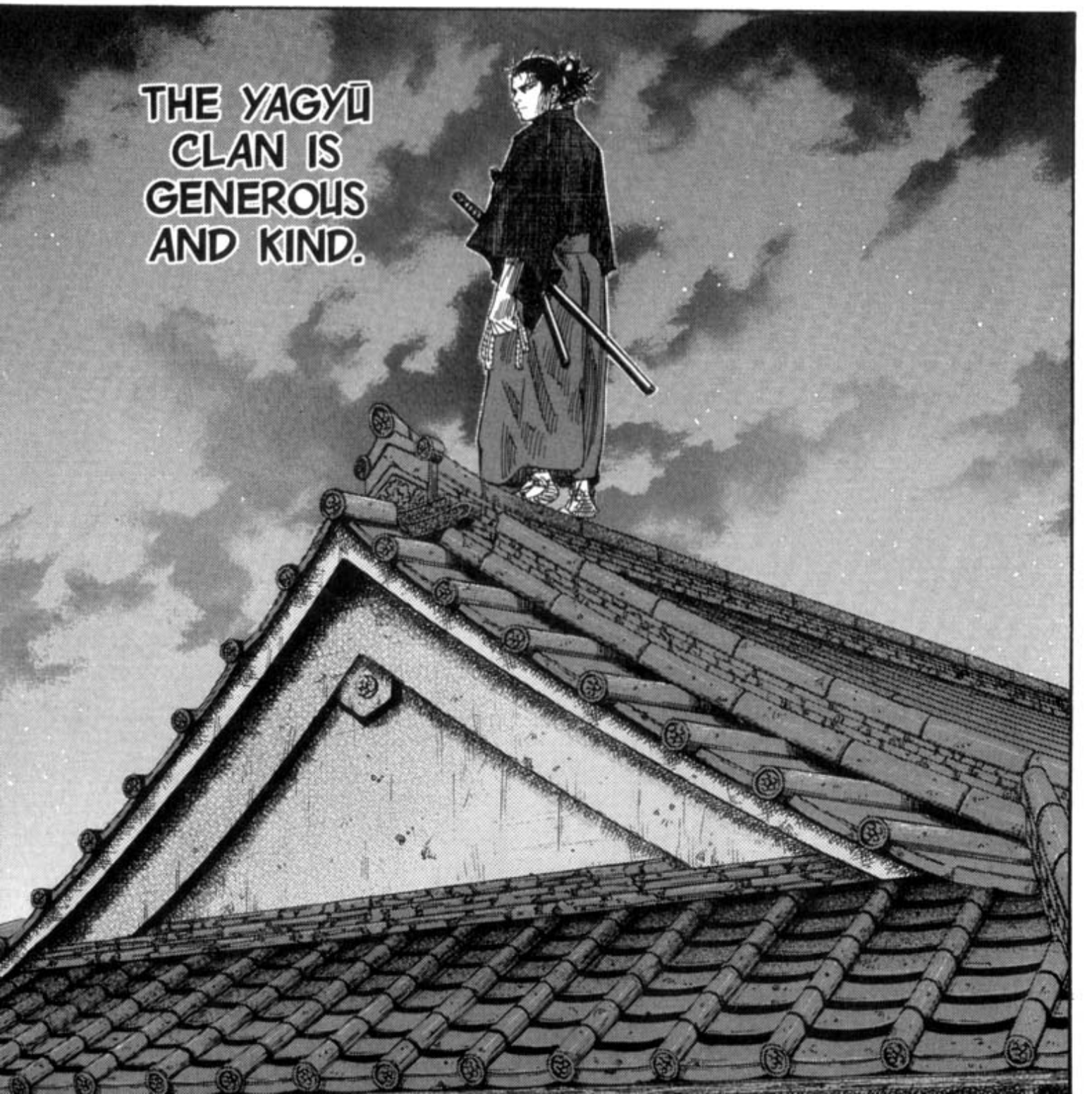
HELP!
HELP!
JŌTARŌ!
WHERE ARE YOU?!

THERE YOU ARE!
OTSŪ, I'M DOWN HERE!
WHY'D THERE HAVE TO BE A DRIED OUT WELL RIGHT HERE?!

I'LL GO GET SOME ROPE.
OKAY... SO B...

TAKE ŌTSŪ WITH ME...?
I COULD DIE AT ANY MOMENT...
WHAT WAS I THINKING?
WITH ME, SHE'D END UP BEING ABANDONED YET AGAIN.

JŌTARŌ, IT'S THE SAME WITH YOU.
YOU'VE BEEN ALONE ALL YOUR LIFE.


THE YAGYŪ CLAN IS GENEROUS AND KIND.

THIS IS A GOOD PLACE...
YOU WON'T BE LONELY HERE.
CHIRP
CHIRP

GASP!
AHH...
AHHH
AH...
AHH!!

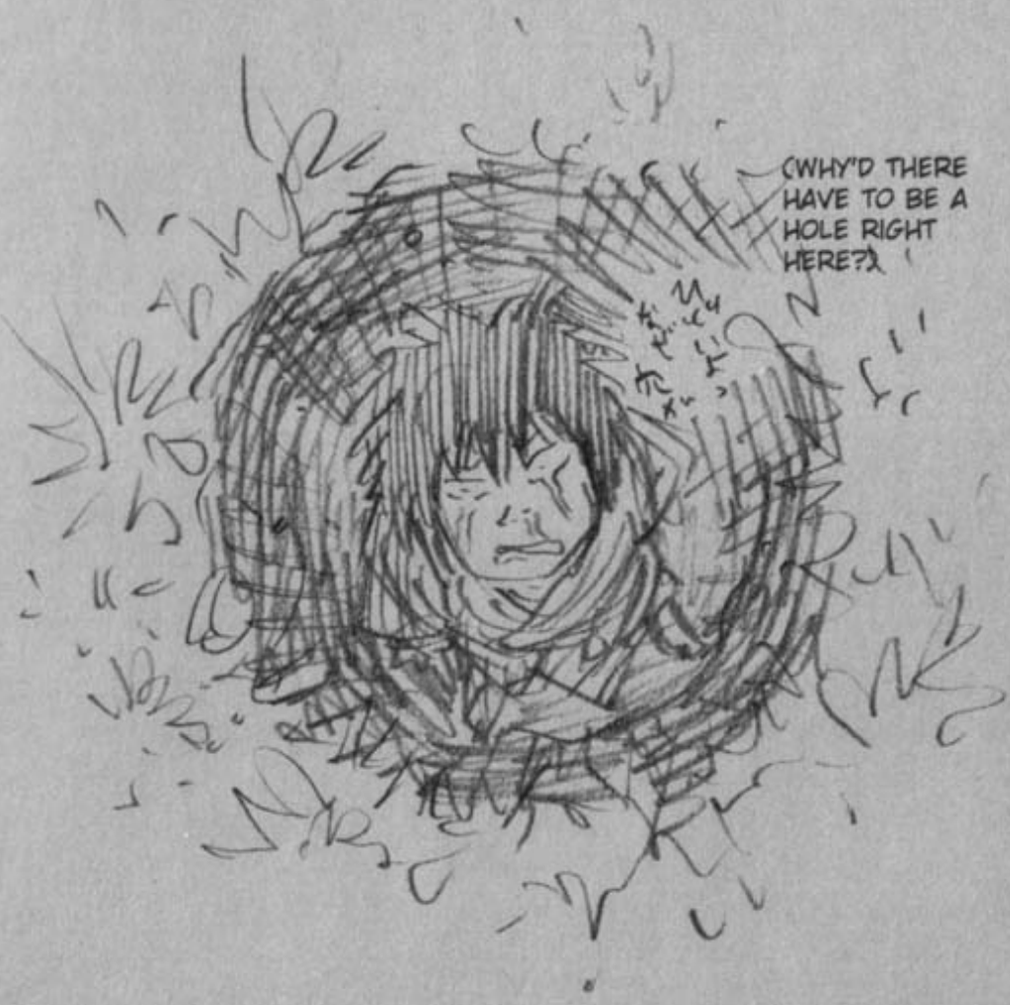
IT'S ALREADY DAWN?

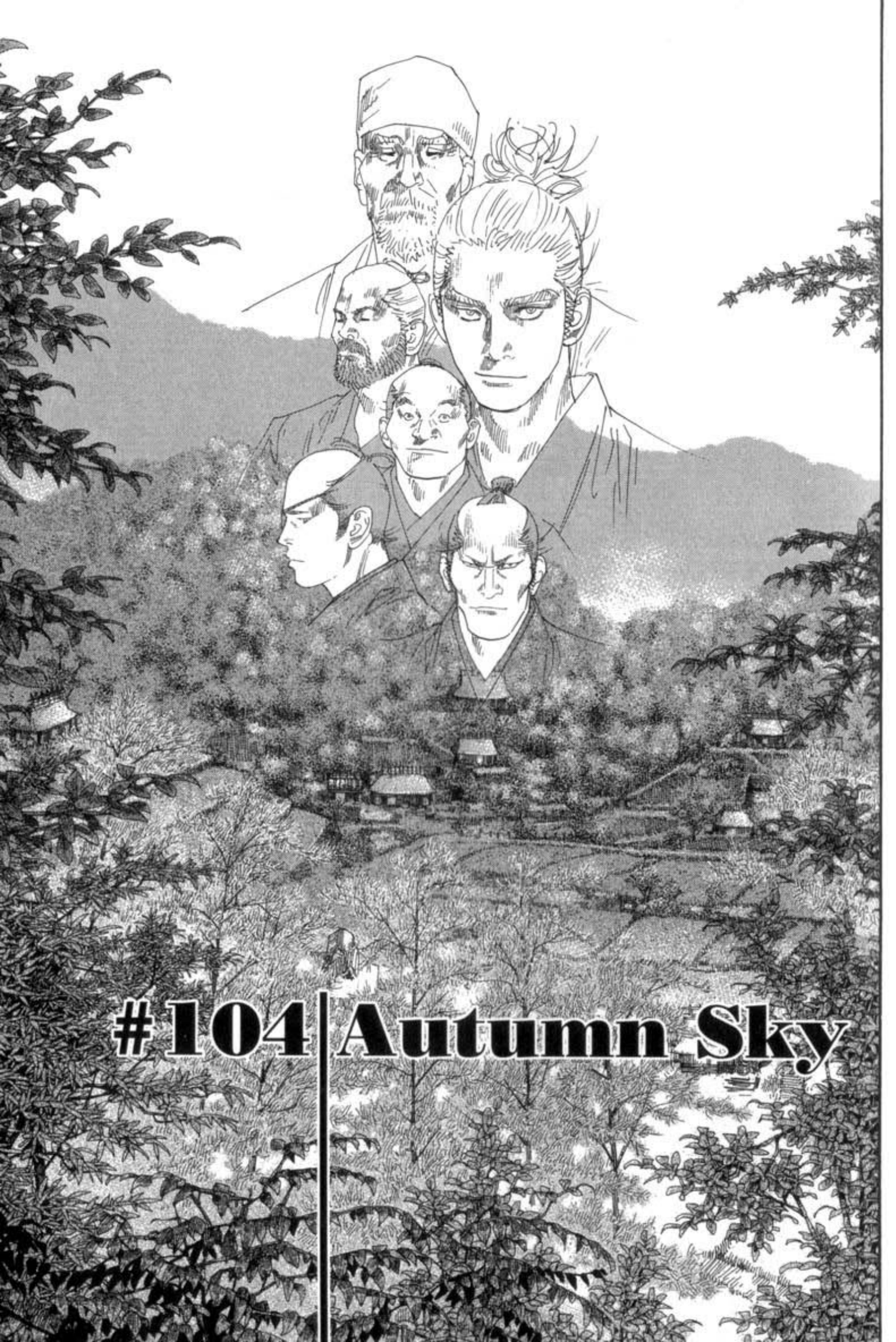
CHIRP
CHIRP

KLP
KLP
KLP
KLP
KLP
KLP
KLP
KLP
HMPH! IT'S MORNING ALREADY.
!
KLP
KLP

FWOOW
!!
HSO

Vagabond


(WHY'D THERE HAVE TO BE A HOLE RIGHT HERE?)



#104 Autumn Sky

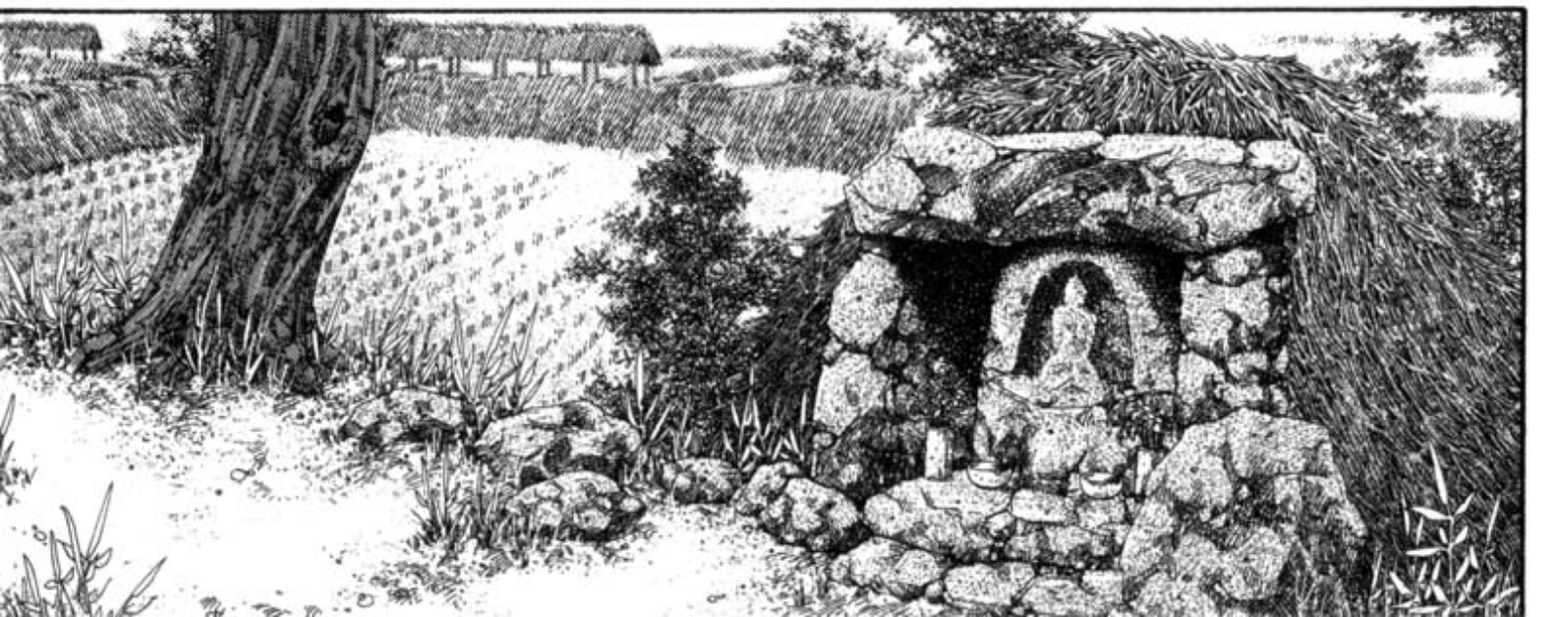
WHOA...
RRRR
HMF
KLOP
SIMMER DOWN, NOW!
HRR
KLOP

NEIGH!!

.....
HELLO, THERE.

FWSHHH

KLP
KLP
KLP
KLP
KLP
"NOW THEN, HYŌGO, HOW WILL YOU COUNTER *THIS?*"
.....
.....



FLP
FLP

AUTUMN'S HERE...

THE CLOUDS ARE HIGH...

WAKK
THWAK
WAK

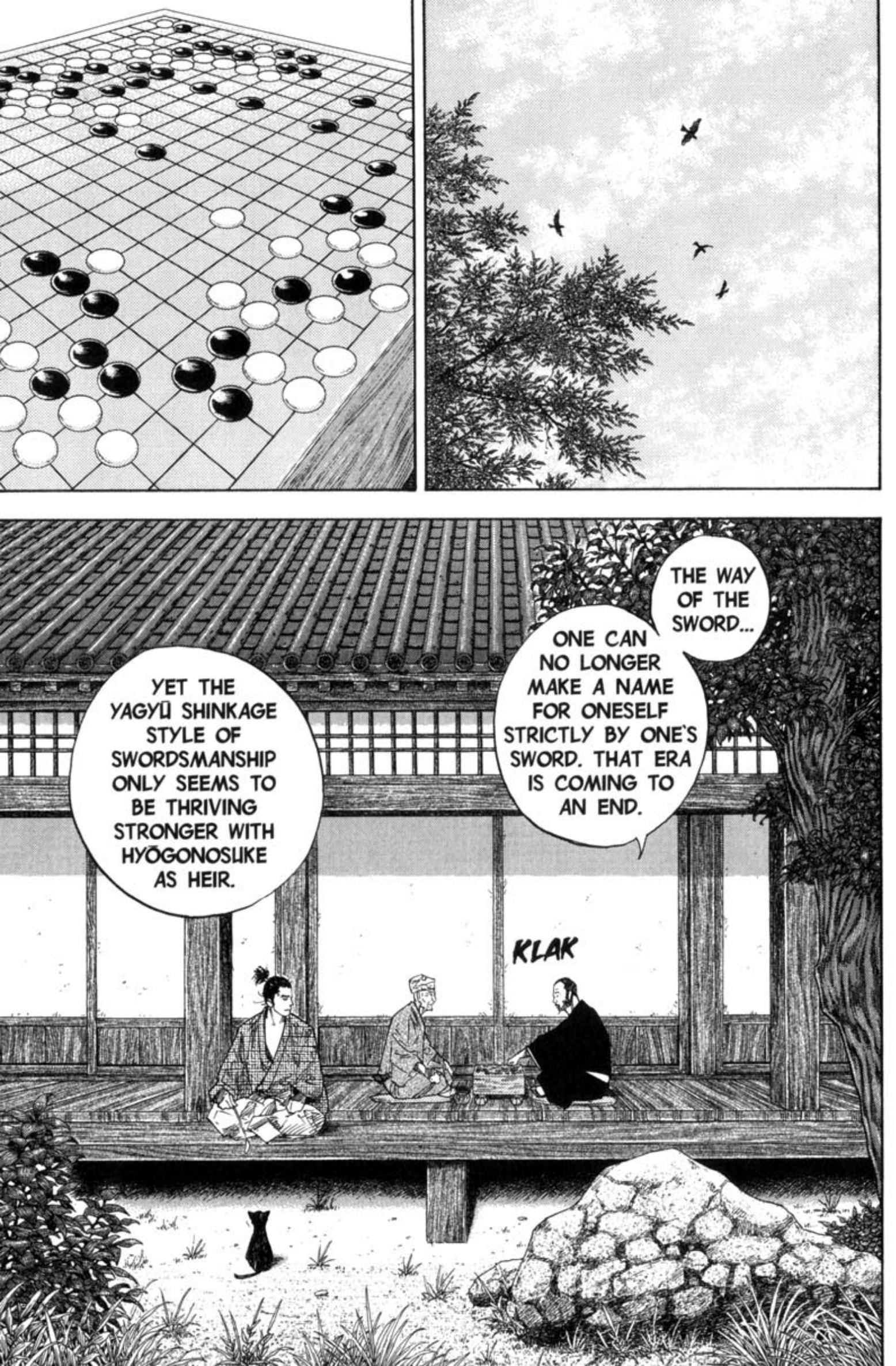
POWER COMES FROM THE GUT!

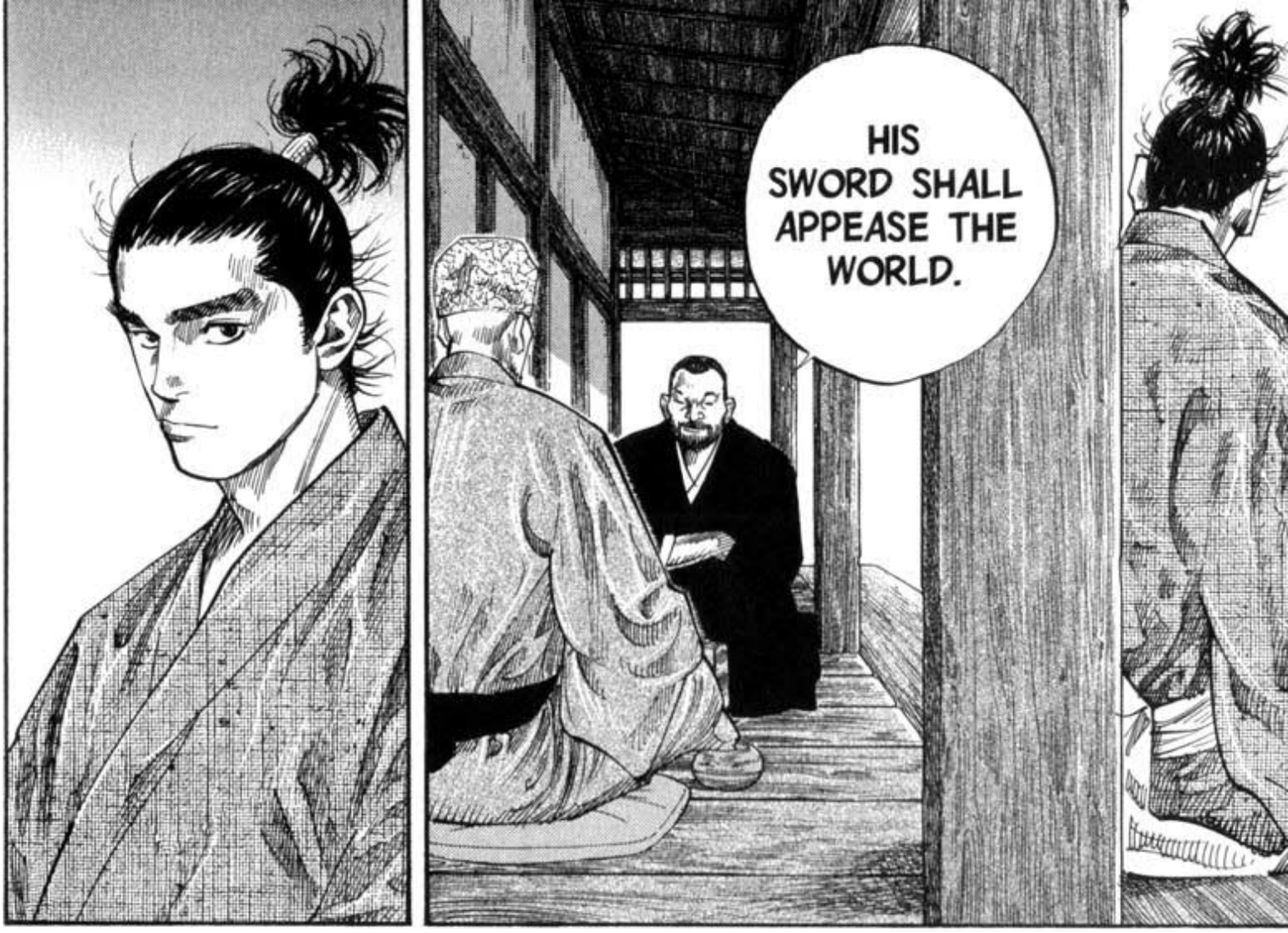
ANCHOR YOURSELF!

YOU HAVE TO COME AT ME WITH MORE THAN THAT!!
KRAK
UNF!

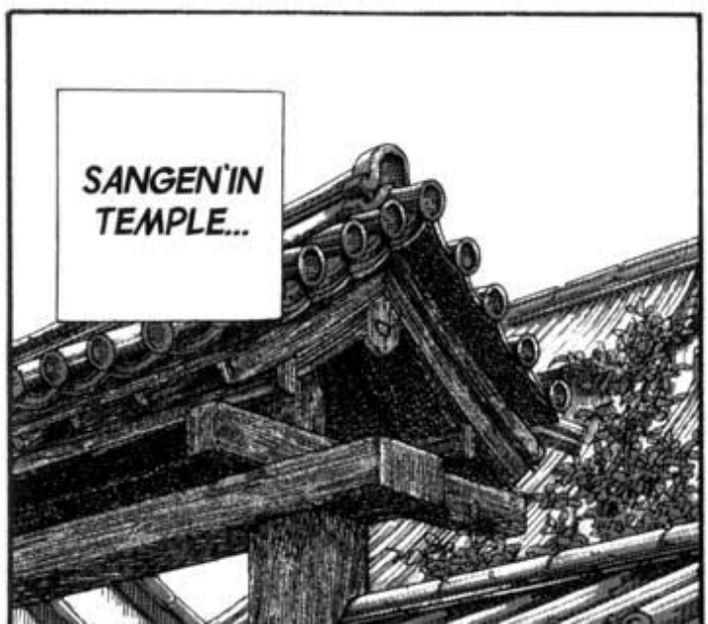
WAK
YAHH!!
NNGH...

HA HA...
COME, MURATA !!
HMPH !!
THAT'S ENOUGH!
MURATA, THAT WAS ONE HIT TOO MANY !!
YOU'RE FIGHTING ME NEXT!!
HMM!
WAK
THWAK
WHUD
YAHH!!
IT'S MY PRIVI-LEGE, SIR...

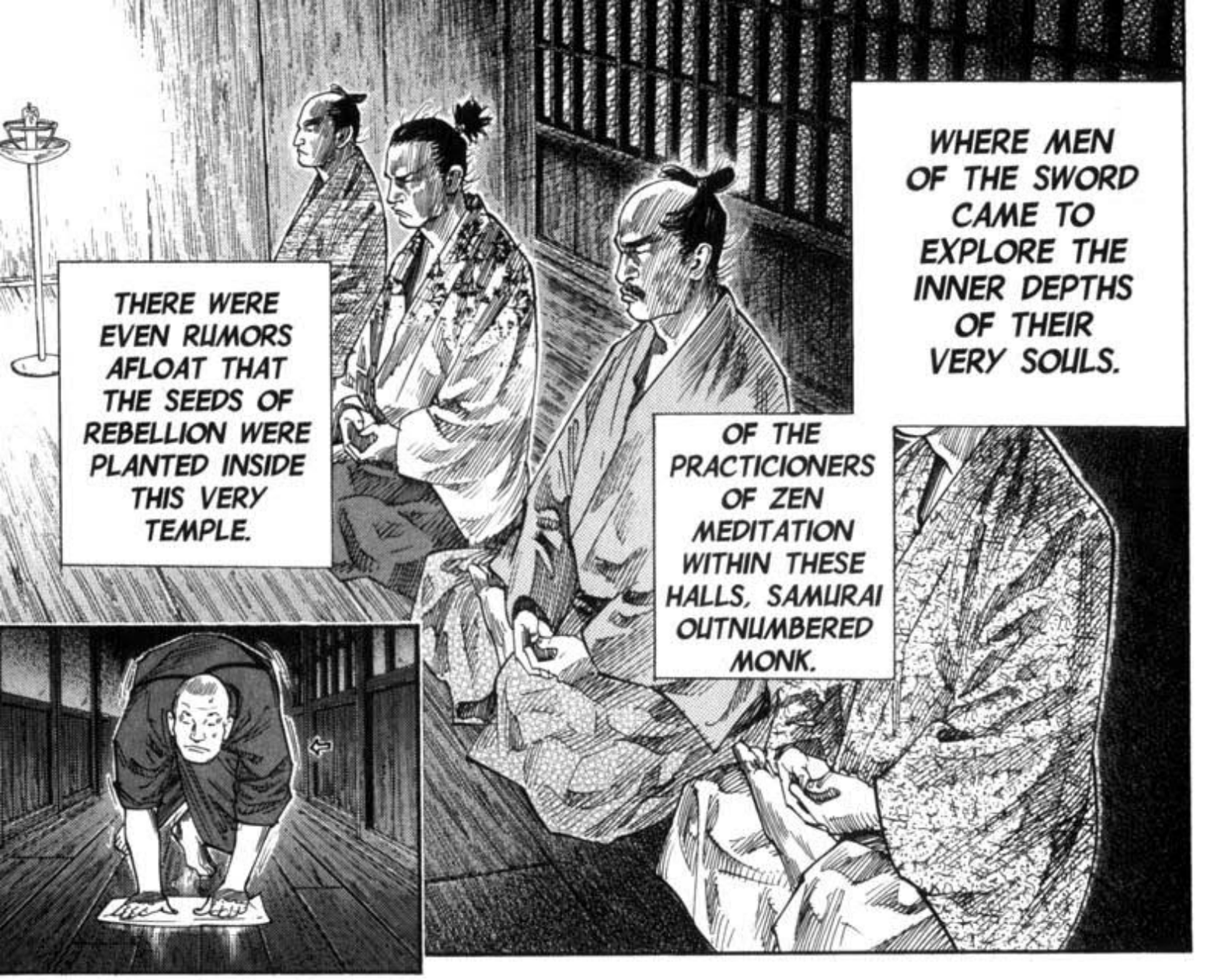

THE WAY OF THE SWORD...
ONE CAN NO LONGER MAKE A NAME FOR ONESELF STRICTLY BY ONE'S SWORD. THAT ERA IS COMING TO AN END.
YET THE YAGYŪ SHINKAGE STYLE OF SWORDSMANSHIP ONLY SEEMS TO BE THRIVING STRONGER WITH HYŌGONOSUKE AS HEIR.
KLAK

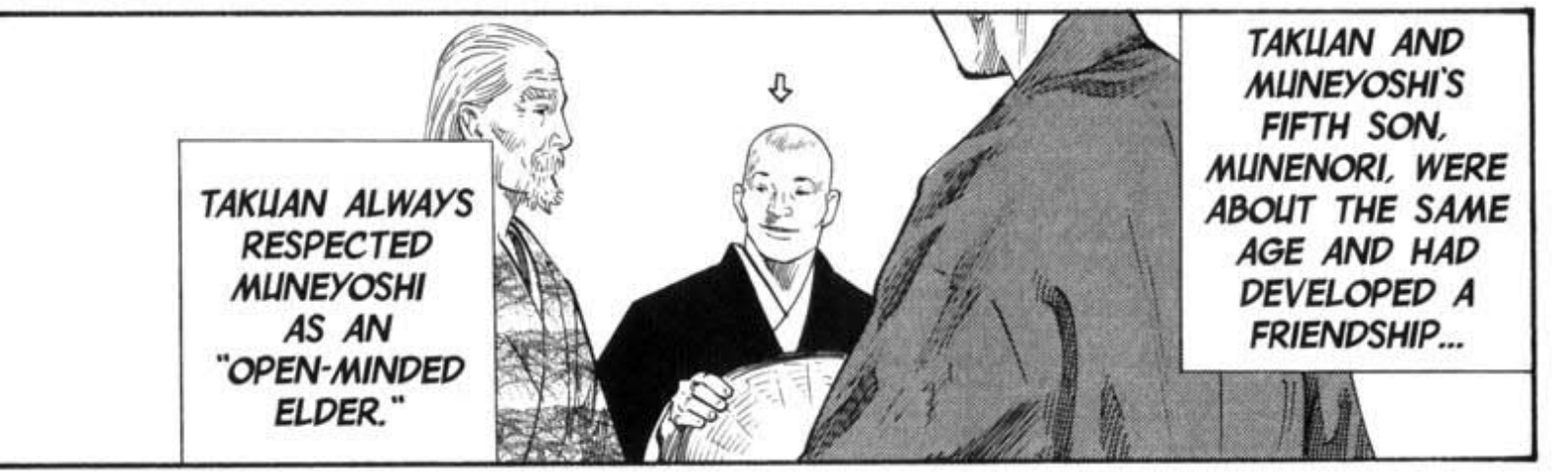

HIS SWORD SHALL APPEASE THE WORLD.

I WASN'T SNOT-NOSED, WAS I?
HMM...


SANGEN'IN TEMPLE...

TAKUAN...
SO THE SNOT-NOSED KID FROM SANGEN'IN TEMPLE NOW TRIES TO SPEAK WITH AN ELOQUENT TONGUE.
HEH HEH HEH!


WHERE MEN OF THE SWORD CAME TO EXPLORE THE INNER DEPTHS OF THEIR VERY SOULS.
THERE WERE EVEN RUMORS AFLOAT THAT THE SEEDS OF REBELLION WERE PLANTED INSIDE THIS VERY TEMPLE.
OF THE PRACTICIONERS OF ZEN MEDITATION WITHIN THESE HALLS, SAMURAI OUTNUMBERED MONK.


TAKUAN ALWAYS RESPECTED MUNEYOSHI AS AN "OPEN-MINDED ELDER."
TAKUAN AND MUNEYOSHI'S FIFTH SON, MUNENORI, WERE ABOUT THE SAME AGE AND HAD DEVELOPED A FRIENDSHIP...

!!
KLAK
TAKE THAT...

...BUT YOU LOOK WELL AND YOUR INSULTS ARE MERCILESS AS EVER.
I SUPPOSE I HAD NO NEED TO WORRY...
AFTER HEARING ABOUT YOUR ILLNESS I TRAVELED FROM AFAR TO GET TO THESE MOUNTAINS...

HE POINTED HIS SWORD AT ME WHILE I WAS IN BED.
WHAT'S THIS, GRAND-FATHER?!
WERE YOU UNAWARE OF THIS, HYŌGO?!

I MET AN INTERESTING FELLOW.

FWIP
YOU KNEW ?!
OF COURSE ...

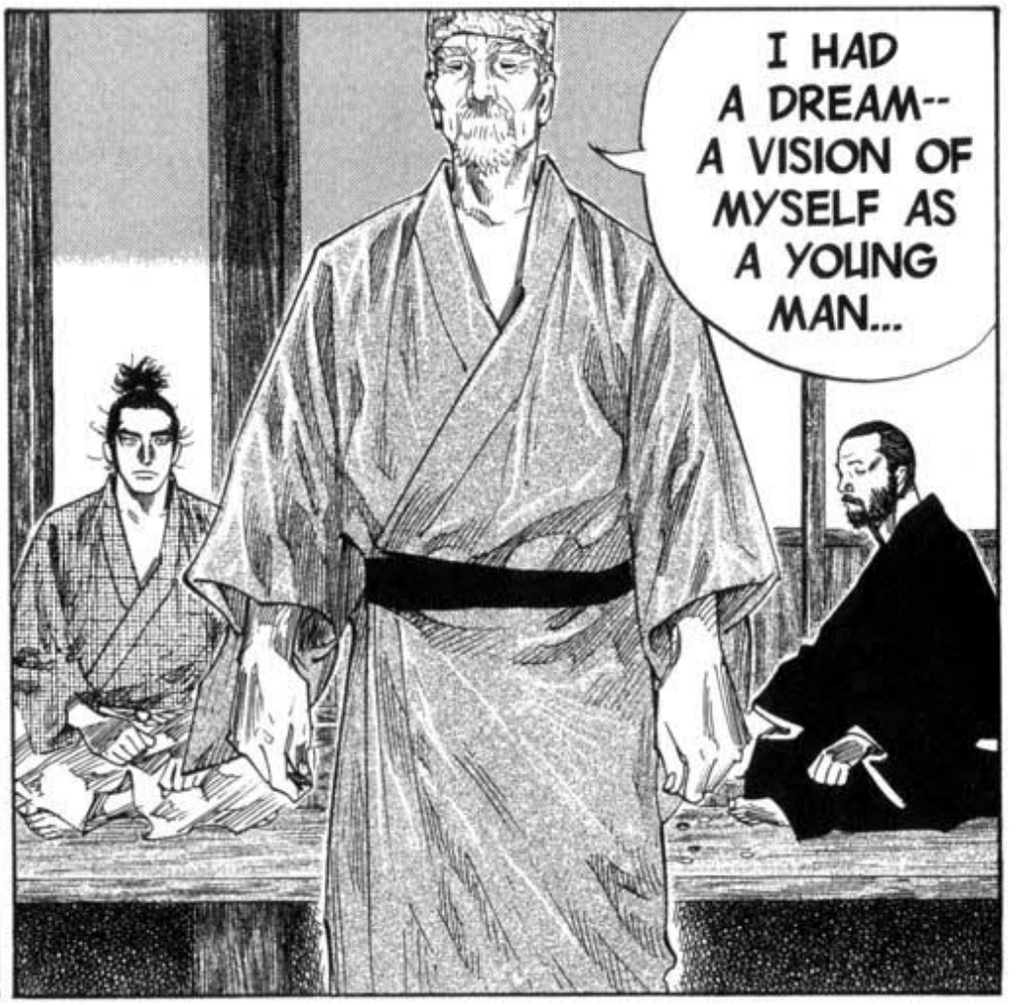
DO NOT FORGET, DISCRETION.
DISCRETION, HYŌGO...
HMM

THE MEN TRIED TO KEEP THIS FROM ME...
HMPH!
ALL THE WHILE, THIS ONE WAS ENJOYING THE COMFORTS OF A WOMAN.

HE ENTERED THIS CASTLE...
...AND BROKE THROUGH THE DEFENSES OF ALL MY DISCIPLES...
...!!
...HE WAS ALL ALONE...

WHO WAS THIS MAN?

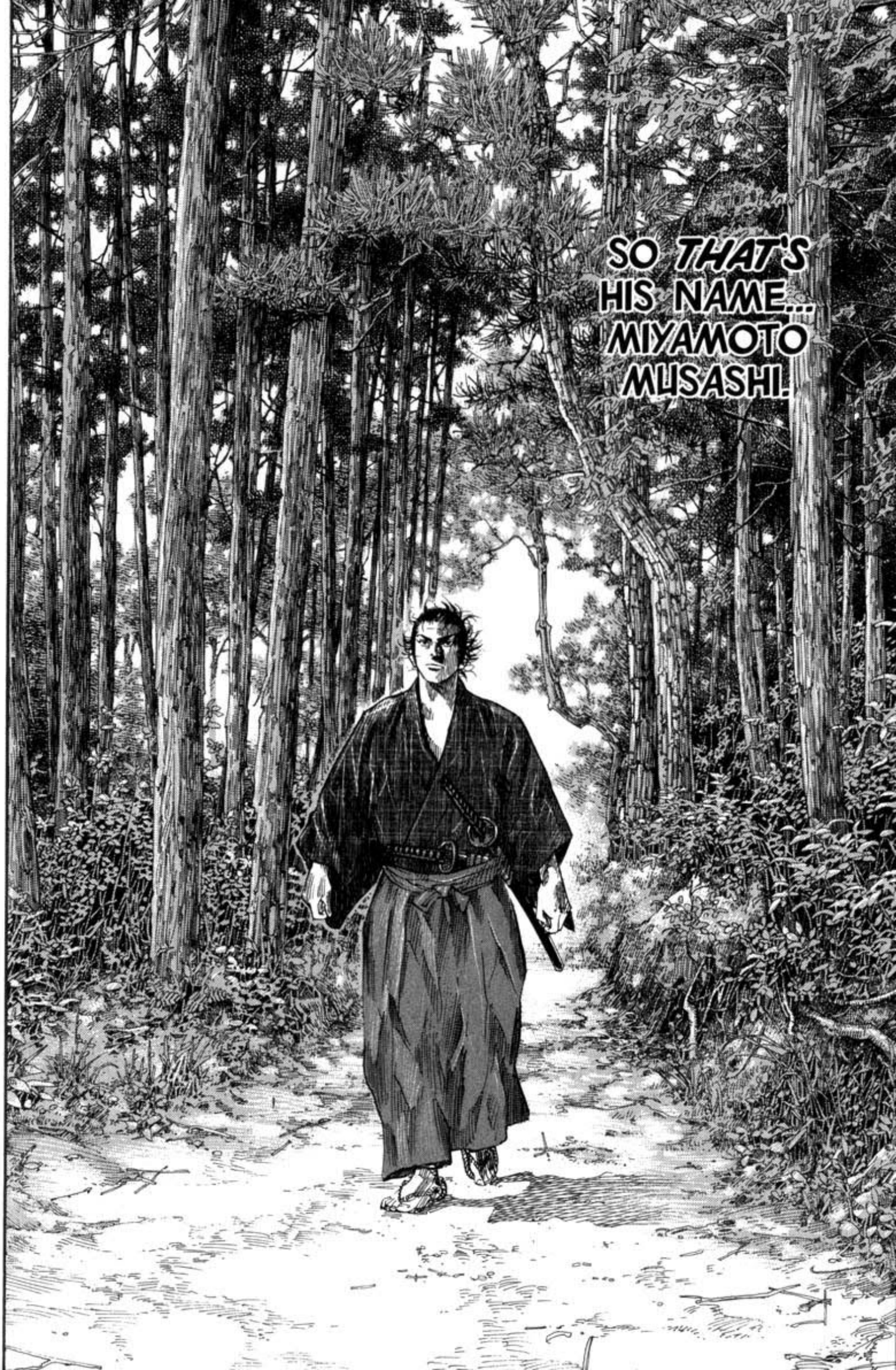
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT IT WAS, BUT I WAS MISTAKEN.
LATER, I UNDERSTOOD...


I HAD A DREAM-- A VISION OF MYSELF AS A YOUNG MAN...

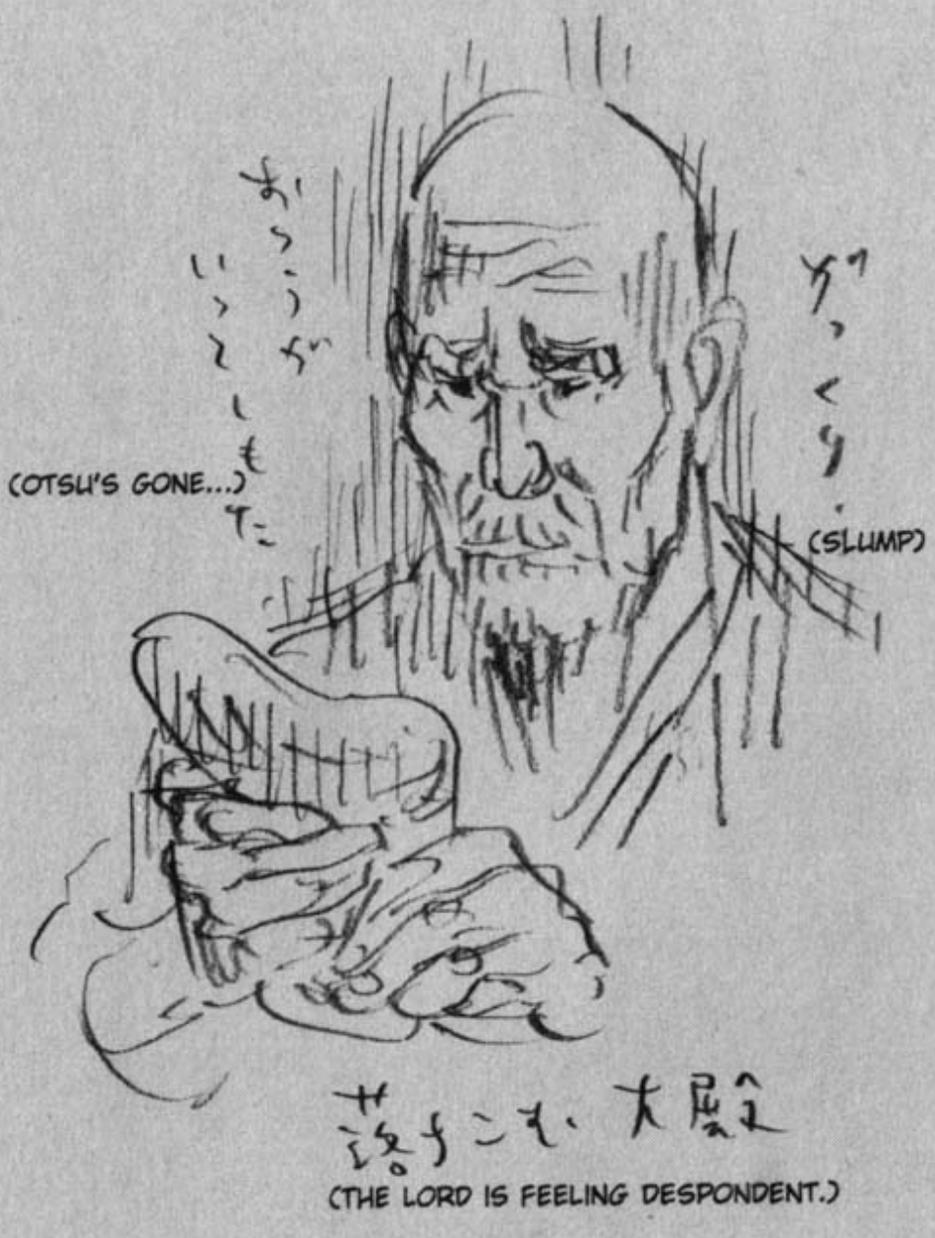
IT WAS A VISION OF THAT YOUNG MAN'S SOUL.

MUSASHI?
HIS NAME WAS MIYAMOTO MUSASHI.
SO YOU KNOW OF HIM, TAKUAN?
...BUT THAT BEAST REKINDLED MY YOUTHFUL FERVOR.
FOR NOW, HE'S JUST A WILD BEAST...
OTSU...
BUT IT'S BECAUSE OF HIM THAT OTSU LEFT US...
I SEE NOW WHY YOU LOOK SO WELL.

MUSASHI...
RECKLESS AND STIRRING UP TROUBLE AGAIN...
IT MUST HAVE BEEN HIM.


SO THAT'S HIS NAME... MIYAMOTO MUSASHI.

Vagabond

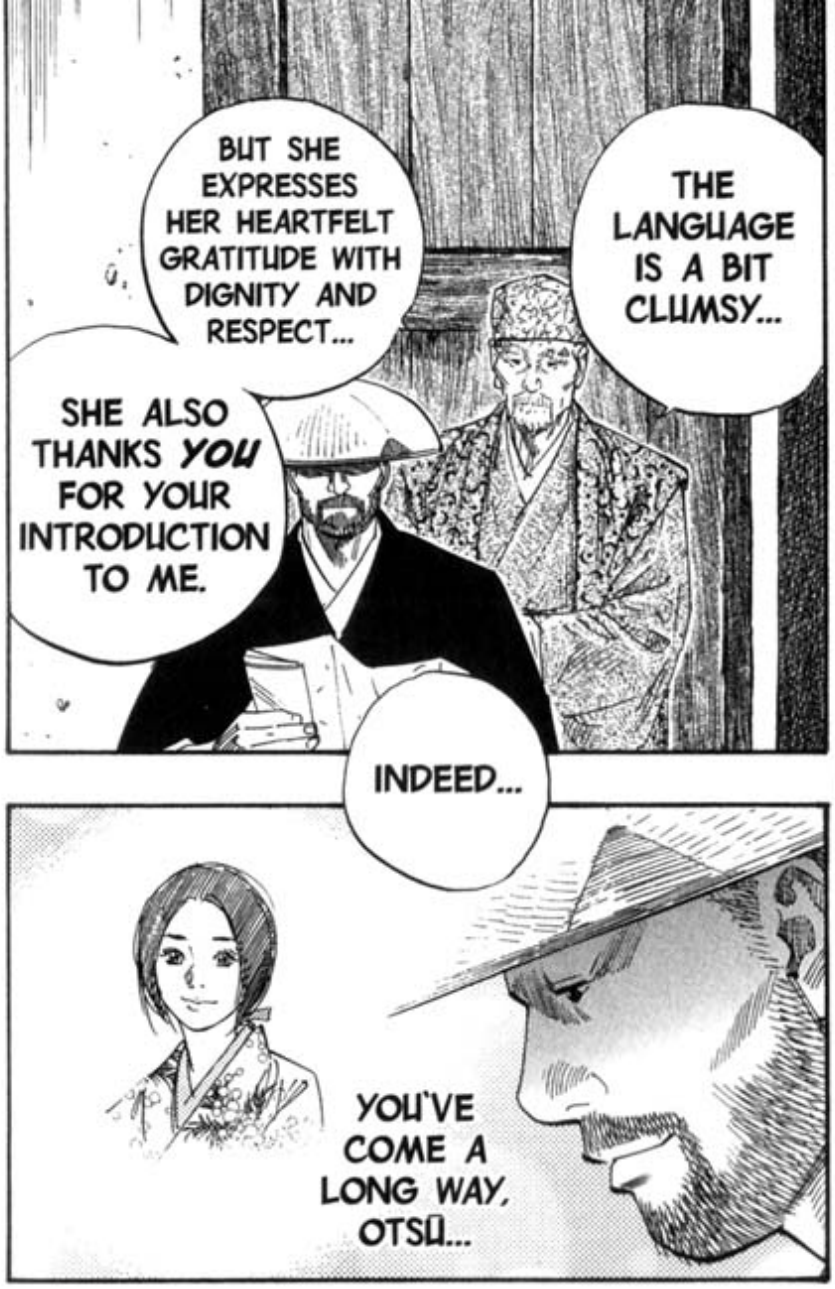

おつうがいっちまった
(OTSU'S GONE...)
がっくり
(SLUMP)
殿さまも大層
(THE LORD IS FEELING DESPONDENT.)

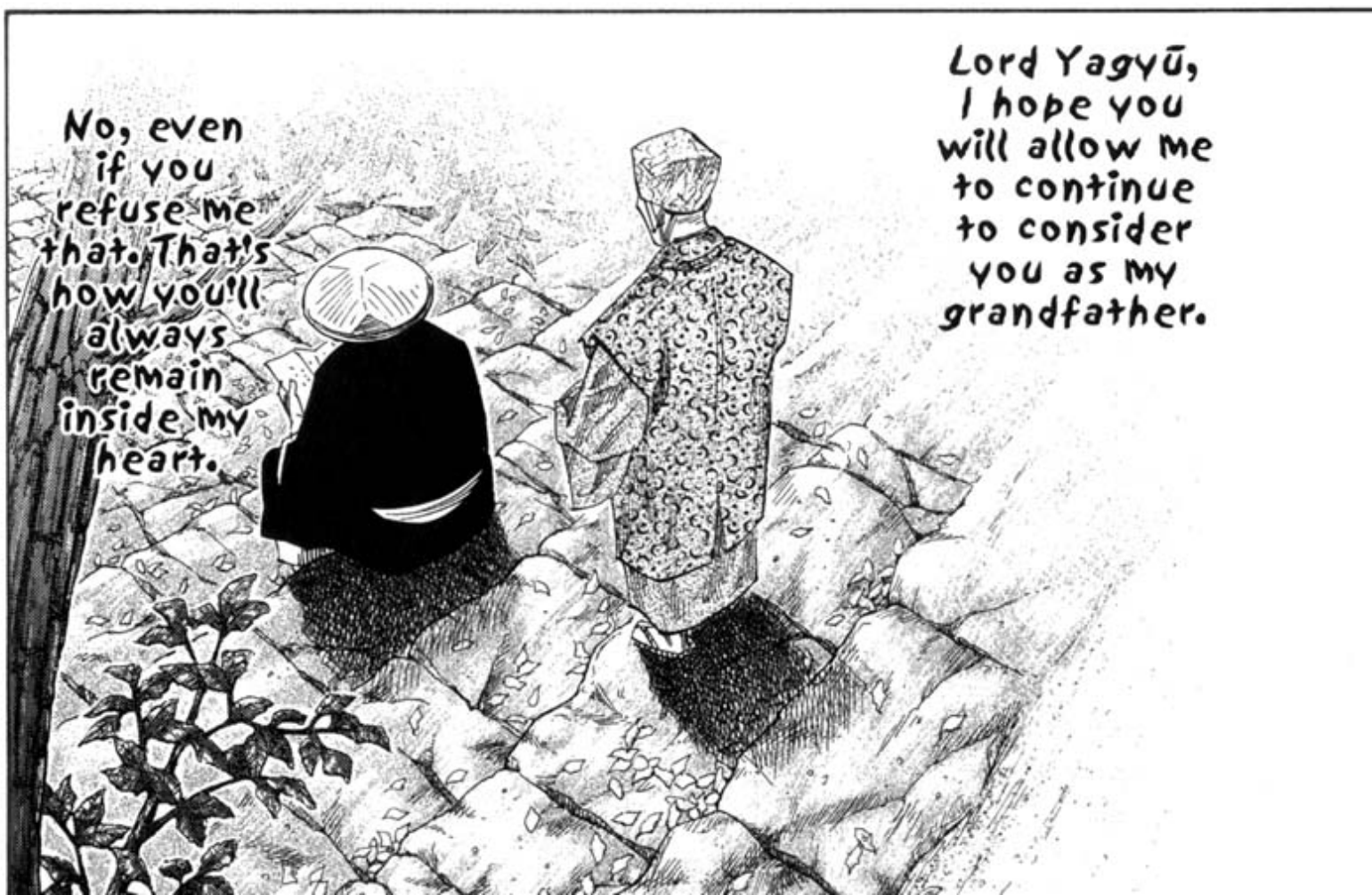
THIS MORNING SAW THE FIRST FROST OF THE YEAR IN THE VALLEY OF THE YAGYŪ...

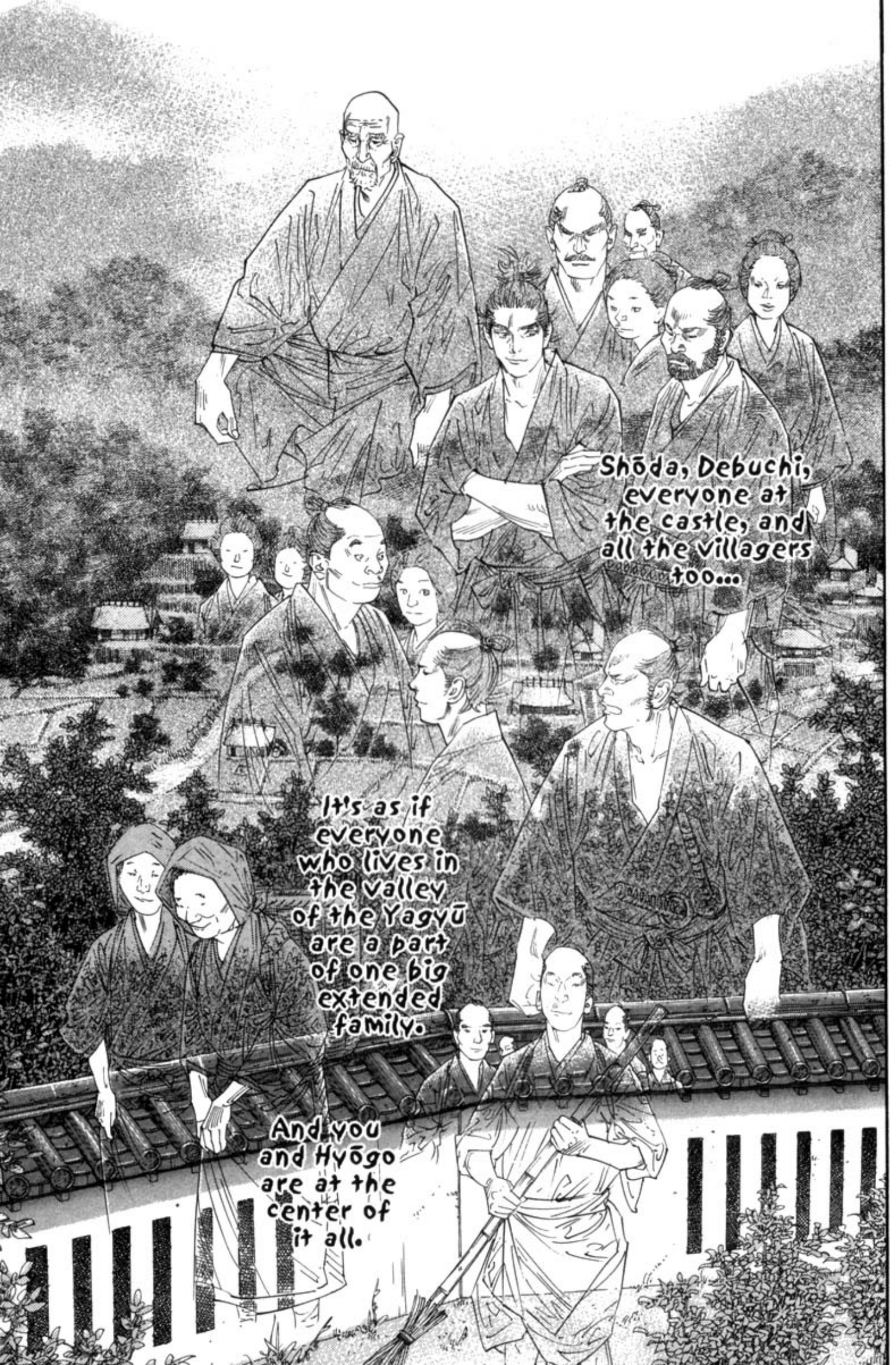
#105 Journey

HYŌGONOSUKE DEPARTED ONCE AGAIN...
...EMBARKING ON A PILGRIMAGE OF TRAINING.

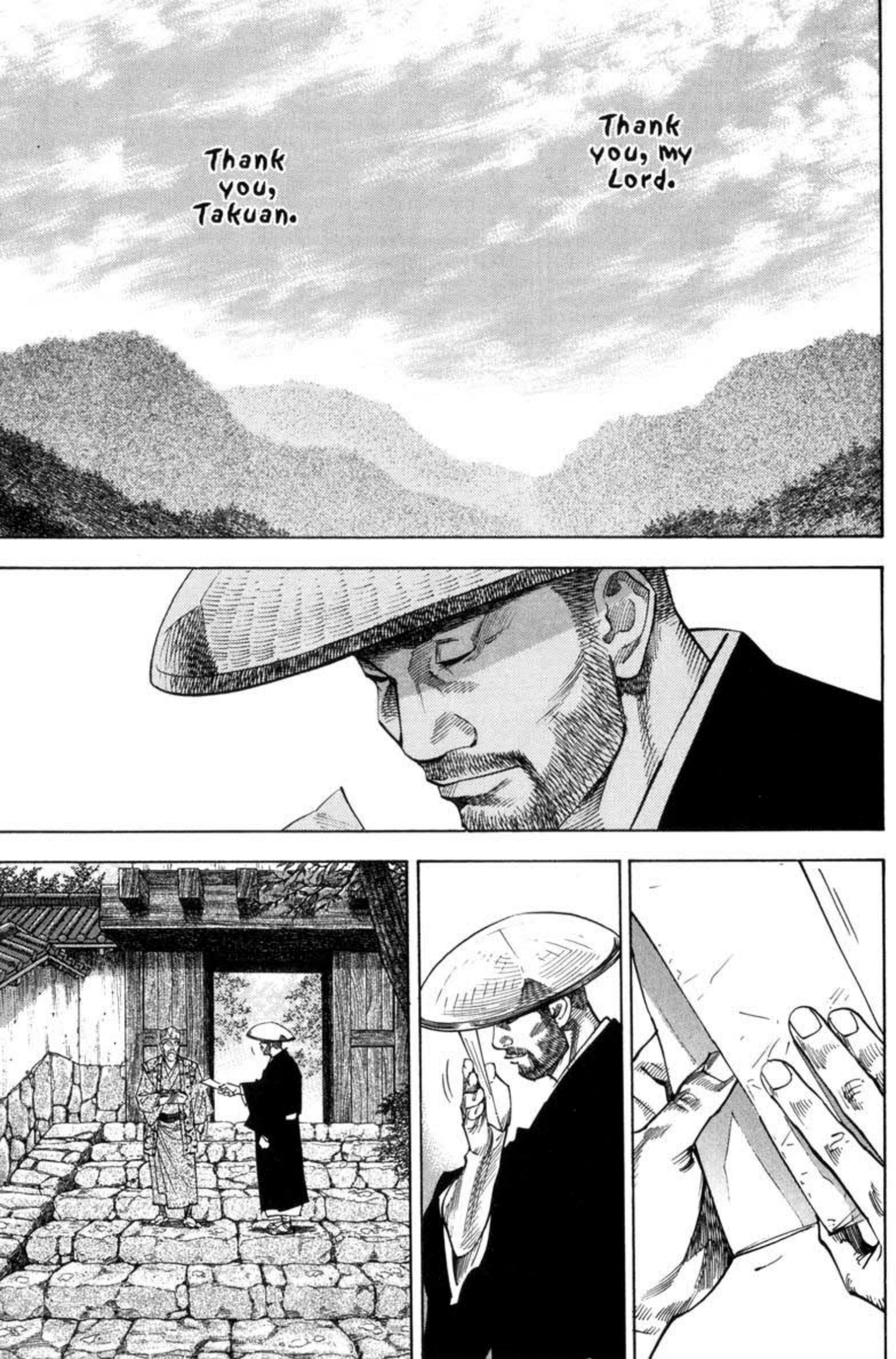
SOON THEREAFTER TAKUAN SŌHŌ ALSO LEFT THE YAGYŪ.
IT'S SO COMFORTABLE HERE, I'M AFRAID I OVERSTAYED MY WELCOME.
YES, YOU DID INDEED.
HEH HEH HEH!
DURING HIS STAY WITH THE YAGYŪ, TAKUAN WAS OFFERED THE POSITION OF ABBOT OF A FAMOUS TEMPLE.
HMF.
FAREWELL, OLD MAN...
PREFERRING THE LIFE OF A WANDERING MONK, TAKUAN DECLINED THE OFFER.
OTSŪ LEFT ME THIS LETTER.
.....
TAKUAN ...
IT'S A PITY THAT I MISSED OTSŪ.


THE LANGUAGE IS A BIT CLUMSY...
BUT SHE EXPRESSES HER HEARTFELT GRATITUDE WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT...
SHE ALSO THANKS *YOU* FOR YOUR INTRODUCTION TO ME.
INDEED...
YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, OTSŪ...


Lord Yagyū, I hope you will allow me to continue to consider you as my grandfather.
No, even if you refuse me that. That's how you'll always remain inside my heart.

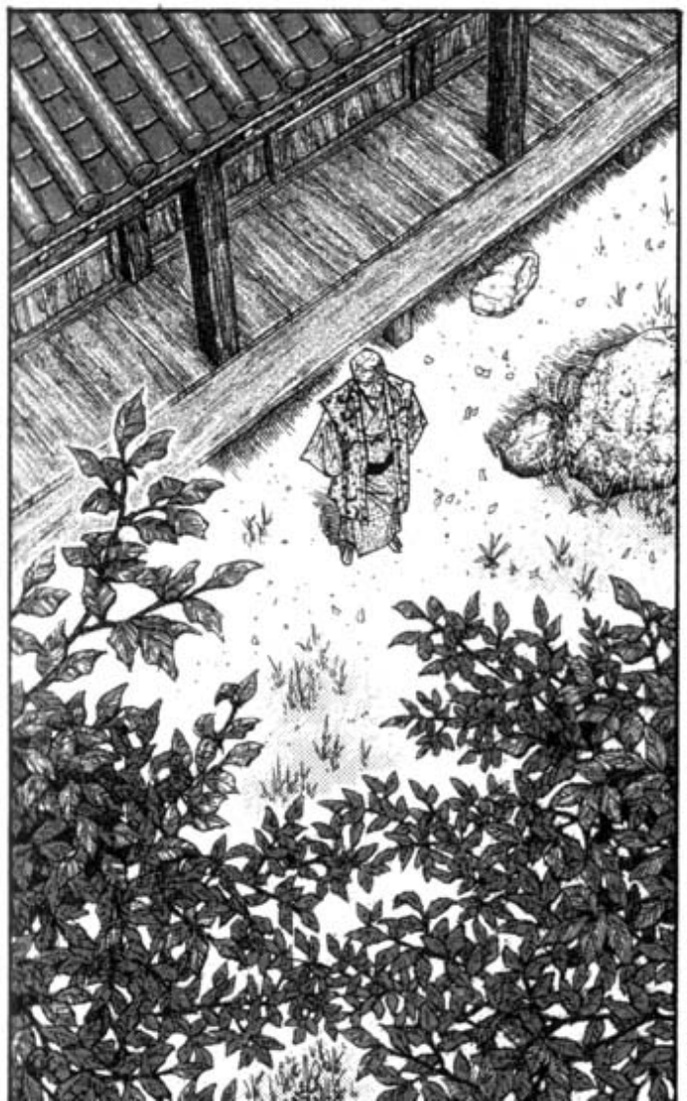

Shōda, Debuchi, everyone at the castle, and all the villagers too...
It's as if everyone who lives in the valley of the Yagyū are a part of one big extended family.
And you and Hyōgo are at the center of it all.

It's like a family...
And before I knew it...
I felt like I, too, was part of the family.


Thank you, Takuan.
Thank you, my Lord.

IF YOU SEE OTSŪ, TELL HER...
...THIS HOUSE WILL ALWAYS WELCOME HER WITH OPEN ARMS.
INDEED.

OLD MAN...
YOU TAKE CARE...
YOU, TOO.



I'LL PLANT SO MANY, THAT BY SPRINGTIME, WE'LL BE SURROUNDED BY FLOWERS...
I'M GOING TO PLANT FLOWERS HERE...

...!!
...!!

TP
TP
TP
TP
SHUF

FWOOSH
!!
GLOOM
IT'S NOT HIM...
HMPH!
GASP!
WHAT THE--?!
FWIP

FWUMP

OTSŪ...
YOU GREW UP WITH MY MASTER, RIGHT?
THAT'S RIGHT.
YOU SAID YOU'D HELP ME LOOK FOR HIM JUST BECAUSE YOU WERE HIS FRIEND FROM CHILDHOOD, RIGHT?
YES.
TP
TP
TP

THAT WAS A LIE, WASN'T IT?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HEH HEH HEH!
YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH MY MASTER.
WHEN YOU SEE HIM YOU'LL SAY, "OH, MUSASHI!"
THEN YOU'LL GIVE HIM A BIG KISS!
HUH?!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?!
SMOOOCH!
THAT'S WHAT GROWNUPS DO, RIGHT?
"OH, MUSASHI!"
SMOOCH SMOOCH!
RIGHT?
.....
I WONDER HOW THAT GIRL AT WATAYA INN IS DOING.
SHUF SHUF

OTSŪ...

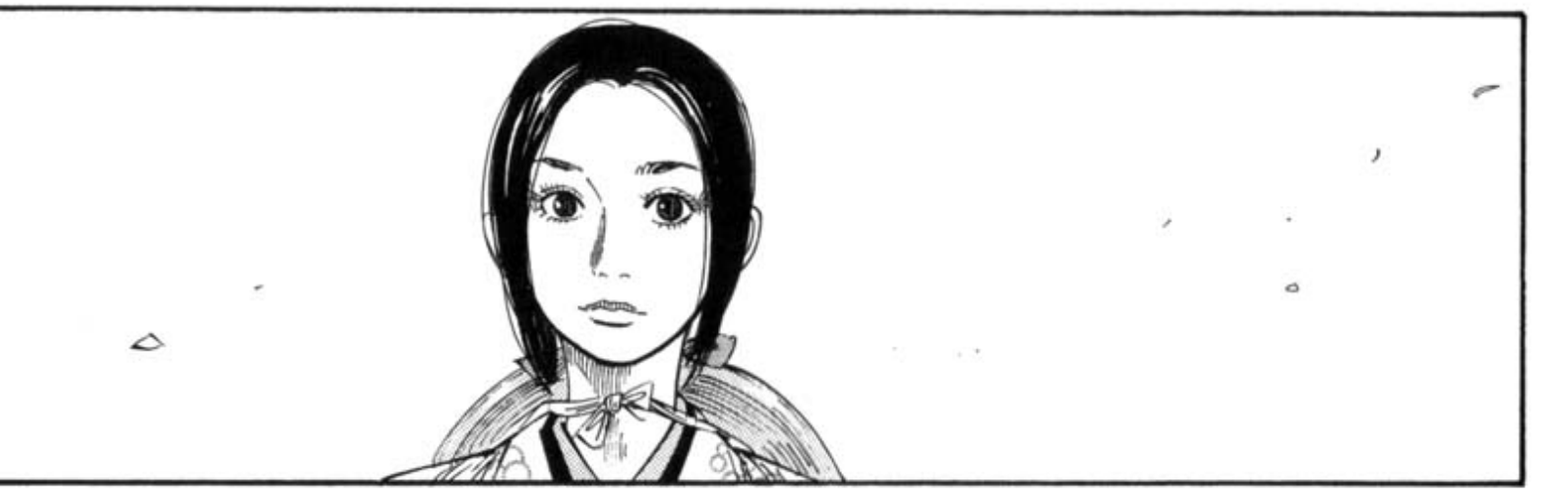
MASTER IS SEEKING OUT STRONG SWORDSMEN TO FIGHT.

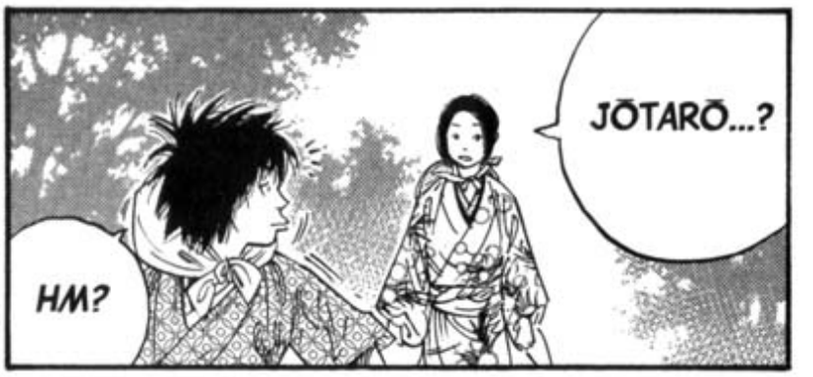
I'M SURE WE'LL FIND HIM SO LONG AS WE LOOK OUT FOR FAMOUS SWORDSMEN AND SCHOOLS.

IT CAN'T BE THAT EASY.

BUT IT WILL BE.

LOOK, OTSŪ, THERE'S A TAVERN!
LET'S SEE IF WE CAN FIND OUT ANYTHING THERE!




JŌTARŌ...?
HM?

AREN'T YOU MAD AT HIM...
...FOR LEAVING YOU BEHIND?

HE DIDN'T LEAVE ME BEHIND!

YES, YOU'RE RIGHT...
HE WENT UP AGAINST FOUR MEN.
IT WAS DARK.
AND I FELL INTO THAT WELL...
YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING, OTSŪ!

WE JUST GOT SEPARATED!
YOU'RE RIGHT...
I'M SURE HE LOOKED FOR ME. HE JUST COULDN'T FIND ME!!

HE PATTED ME ON THE HEAD AND THEN HE SAID...
MY MASTER...
I'M SORRY, JŌTARŌ.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED SUCH A SILLY QUESTION ...
MY MASTER ...!!
.....
"LET'S BECOME STRONGER *TOGETHER*..."

I'LL JOIN YOU...
I'LL BECOME STRONGER, TOO!!

HEY, WHY'D YOU CALL ME "JŌTARŌ-CHIN?"
I DON'T KNOW...
YOU LOOK LIKE A "TARŌ-CHIN."
I DON'T GET IT.
OKAY, LET'S GO IN...
C'MON, JŌTARŌ-CHIN!
OKAY.
SNIF.
SNIF
EXCUSE ME!
THAT BASTARD ...!!
I'LL KILL HIM!!

I'LL KILL THAT BASTARD...
THAT DAMN MIYAMOTO MUSASHI!!

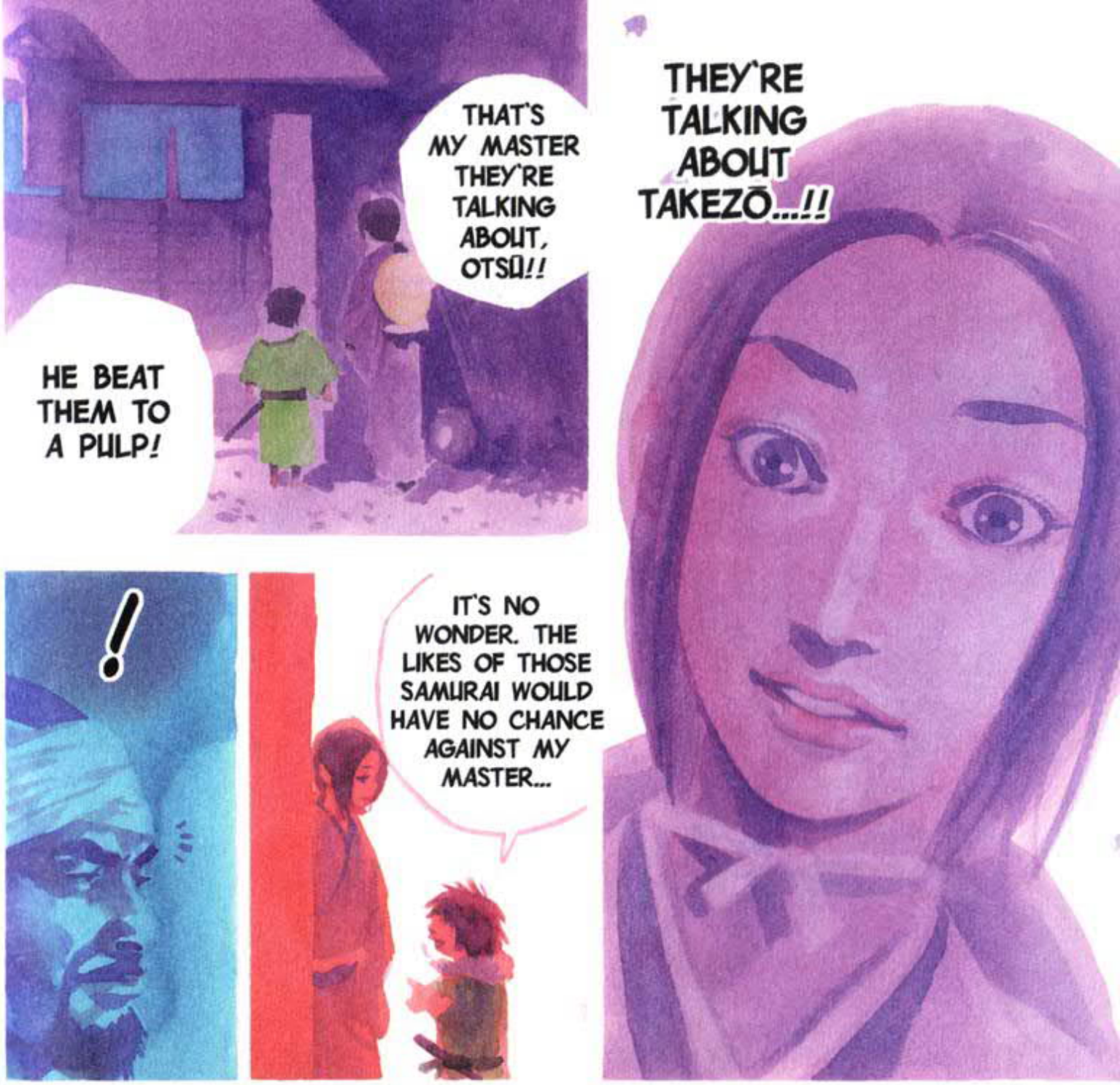
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
LOOKS LIKE WE MAY FIND HIM SOONER THAN WE THOUGHT!!
SMIRK

Vagabond

そうだよね
お師匠…
(ISN'T THAT RIGHT, MASTER?)
ぐすっ
(SNIF)

THAT BASTARD CALLED HIMSELF MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, RIGHT?
YEAH...
WE'RE NOT GOING TO LET HIM GET AWAY WITH THIS.
WE'LL TRACK THE BASTARD DOWN AND KILL HIM!!

#106 Footprints


THAT'S MY MASTER THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT, OTSŪ!!
HE BEAT THEM TO A PULP!
THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT TAKEZŌ...!!
!
IT'S NO WONDER. THE LIKES OF THOSE SAMURAI WOULD HAVE NO CHANCE AGAINST MY MASTER...

HE CALLED HIM "MASTER."
WHAT ?
LEAVE HIM BE. HE'S JUST A BRAT.
LET'S NOT TARNISH THIS SCHOOL'S REPUTATION ANY FURTHER.
UH-OH...
FWP
.....

THAT'S RIGHT! MIYAMOTO MUSASHI'S MY MASTER!!
HE'S REALLY STRONG, ISN'T HE?! YOU GUYS GOT WHAT YOU DESERVED!!
DAMN BRAT!!
DID YOU SAY MIYAMOTO MUSASHI WAS YOUR MASTER?!
FWUP
ARGH!!
HUH?
JŌTARŌ !!
DON'T LET HIM GO!!
THAT WOMAN'S WITH THE KID. GRAB HER!!

FWAP
NNGH!
TUGG
BE STILL, WOMAN!!
AND THEN TWIST UPWARDS.
"GRAB THE WRIST..."
TUGG
?!

YARGHH!!!

I DIDN'T LEAVE THE YAGYŪ WITHOUT LEARNING A THING OR TWO!
HMPH!

HM!

WHUD
NNGH!

FSH

!!
GASP!

THAT'S...

HEH HEH...A FEISTY ONE, SHE IS...

HMM... NOT A BAD LOOKING WOMAN.

THE EMBLEM OF THE BAMBOO HATS!

THE FAMILY CREST OF THE YAGYŪ!!

HUH?
THERE IS NO SHAME IN BEING DEFEATED BY TAKEZ--UH, I MEAN...IN BEING DEFEATED BY MIYAMOTO MUSASHI...

GASP!
YOU MEN...
AHEM...
THERE IS...

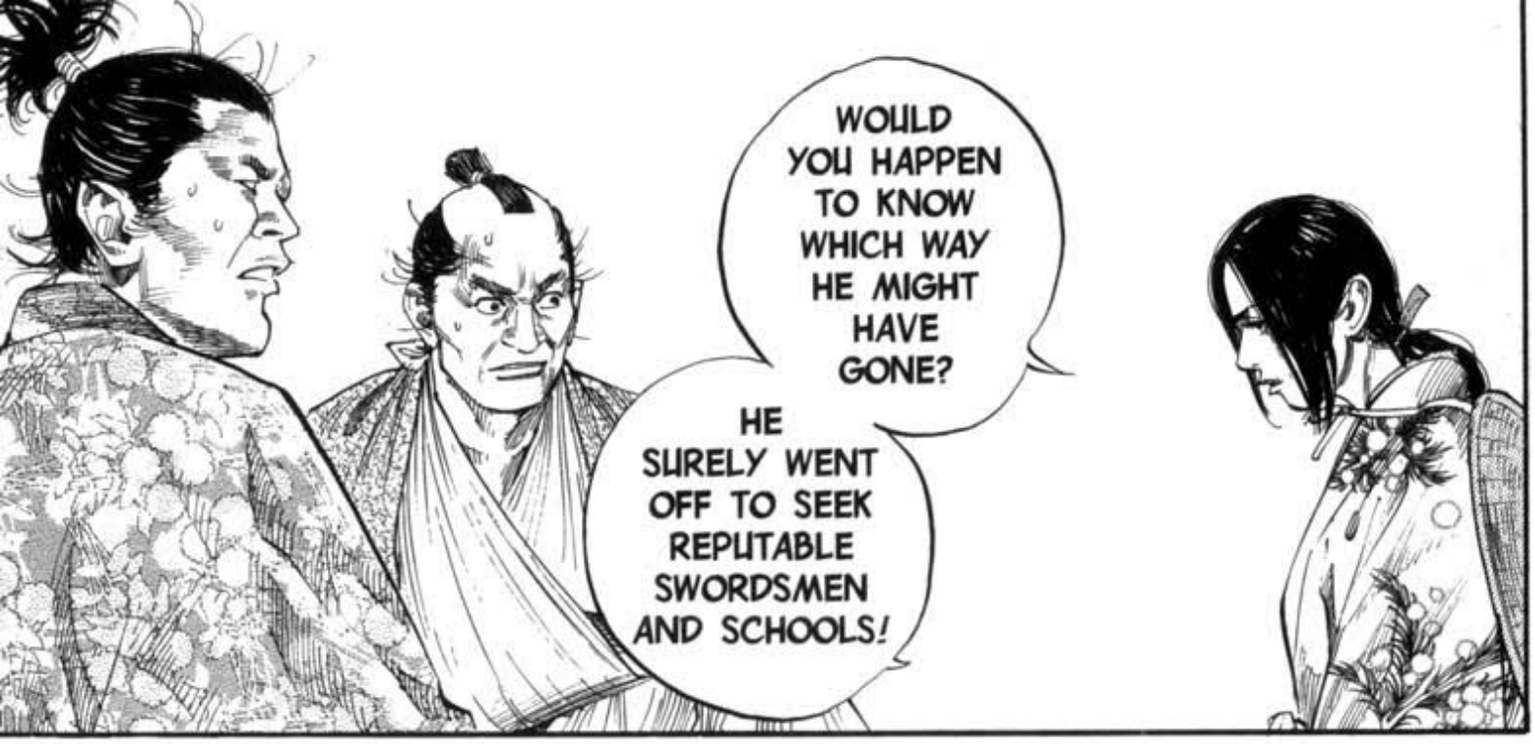
THIS WOMAN...
COULD SHE BE A DAUGHTER OF THE YAGYŪ...?

...
SO MIYAMOTO MUSASHI IS STRONG...
HE'S EVEN ACKNOWLEDGED BY A MEMBER OF THE YAGYŪ FAMILY.

DOES THAT MEAN...
...HE WENT TO THE YAGYŪ CLAN?

.....

THAT MAN IS MOST FORMIDABLE...!


WOULD YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHICH WAY HE MIGHT HAVE GONE?
HE SURELY WENT OFF TO SEEK REPUTABLE SWORDSMEN AND SCHOOLS!

THE INVINCIBLE YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI !!
HE ACTUALLY CHALLENGED THE MIGHTY YAGYŪ!!
SO HE *DID* GO TO THE YAGYŪ...!

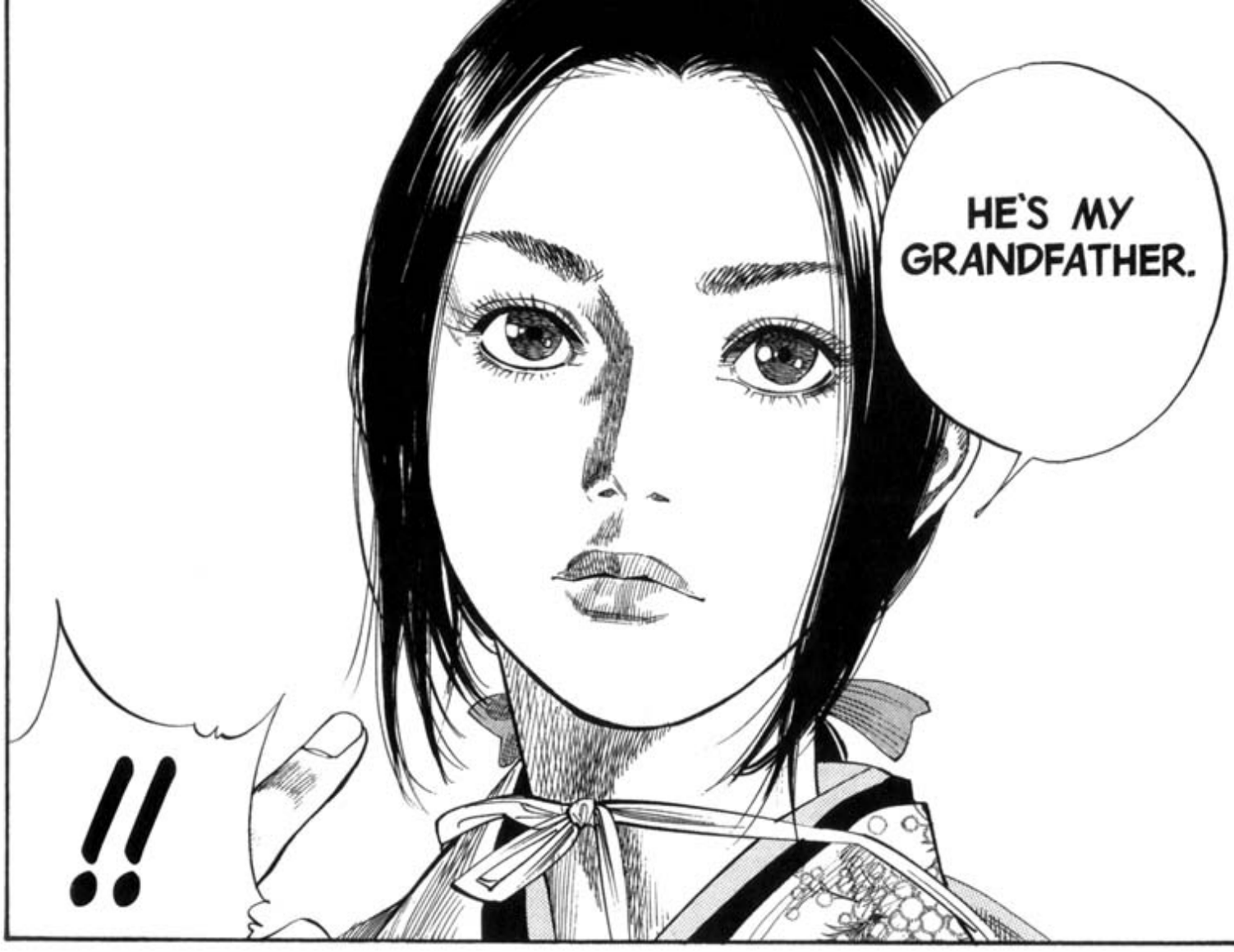
HOW ARE YOU RELATED TO LORD SEKISHŪSAI?
SO THE YAGYŪ SENT YOU TO GO AFTER HIM.

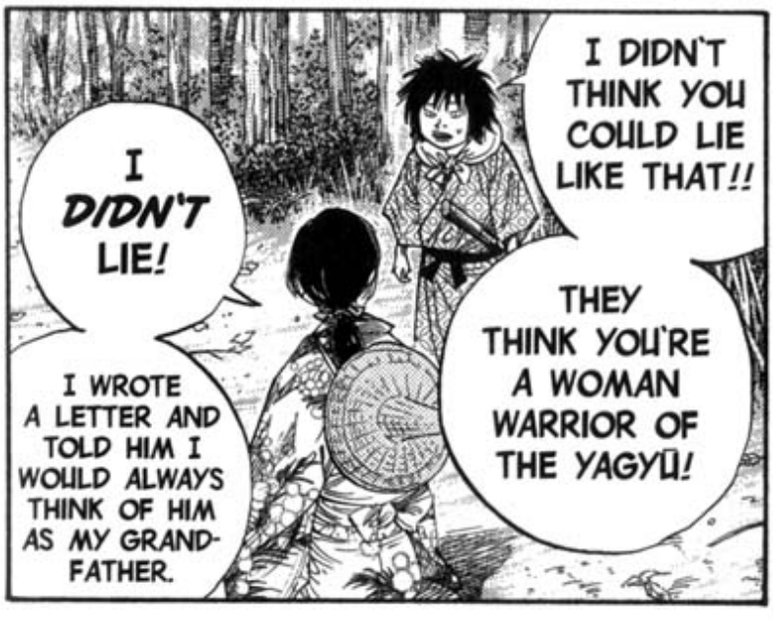
I HOPE THE MIGHTY YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI WAS UNHARMED...
OF COURSE.
YOU THINK HE WOULD LOSE TO A LONE RŌNIN?
NO...OF COURSE NOT.

THAT MAN WAS INCREDIBLY STRONG...
MAKES SENSE.

.....

GULP!


HE'S MY GRANDFATHER.
!!


I DIDN'T THINK YOU COULD LIE LIKE THAT!!
I DIDN'T LIE!
THEY THINK YOU'RE A WOMAN WARRIOR OF THE YAGYŪ!
I WROTE A LETTER AND TOLD HIM I WOULD ALWAYS THINK OF HIM AS MY GRAND-FATHER.

THAT WAS TERRIFYING!!
SHLUMP
THAT WAS IMPRESSIVE, OTSŪ!

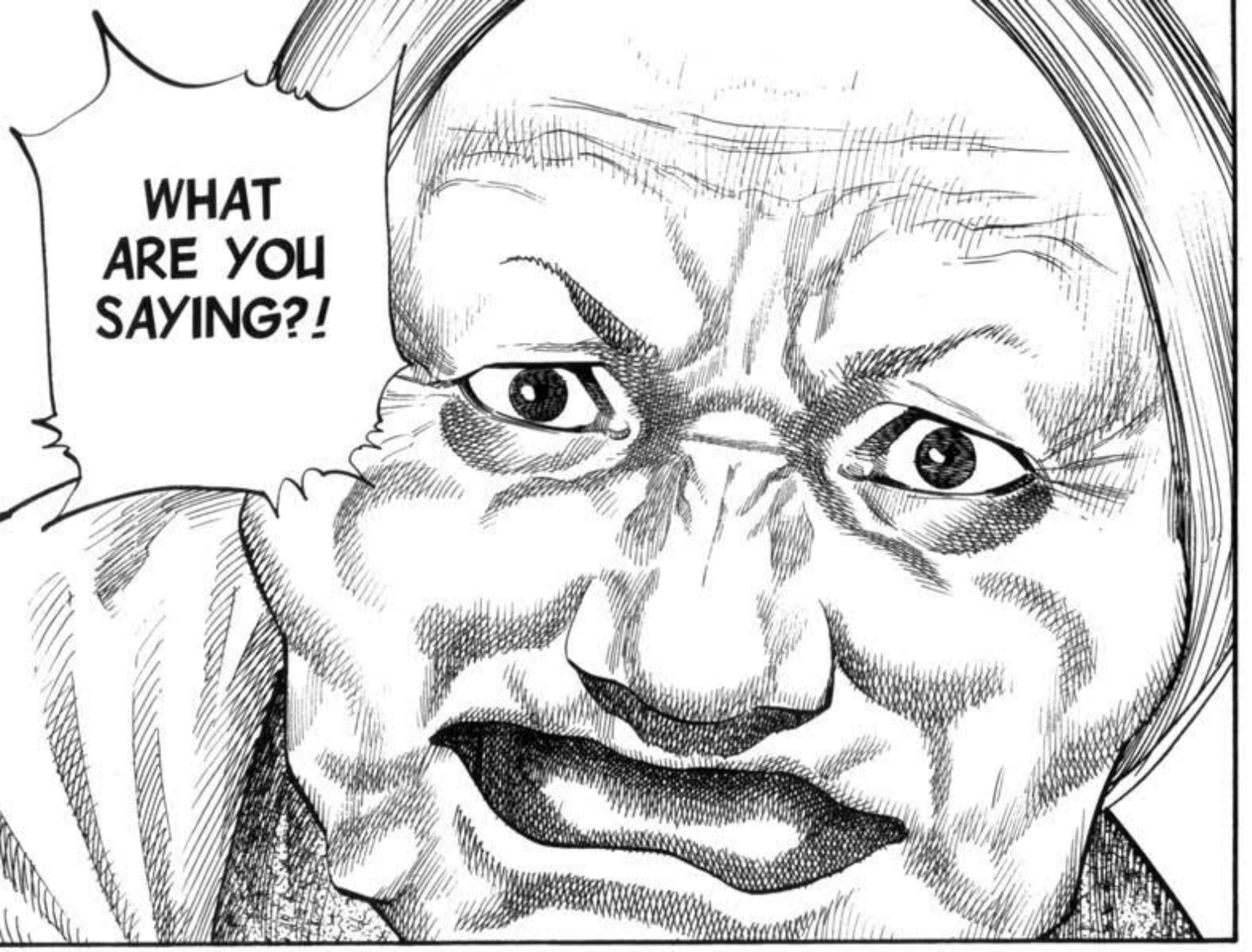
THANK YOU FOR PROTECTING ME.

WE GOT LUCKY. THEY TOLD US EVERYWHERE MY MASTER MIGHT'VE GONE.
YES.
BUT DON'T PROVOKE ANY MORE FIGHTS. YOU'RE NOT STRONG ENOUGH.
WE'LL FIND HIM FOR SURE!
WE'LL CHECK EVERY LAST PLACE!
THAT'S A NICE DAGGER.
CAN I HAVE IT?
NO.
IT'S A GIFT FROM THE LORD.
WHAT?!
WE NEED TO FIND A PLACE TO STAY TONIGHT.
IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO RAIN.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
BUT FIRST I WANT TO EAT SOME DUMPLINGS.
YOU WANT TO EAT AGAIN?!

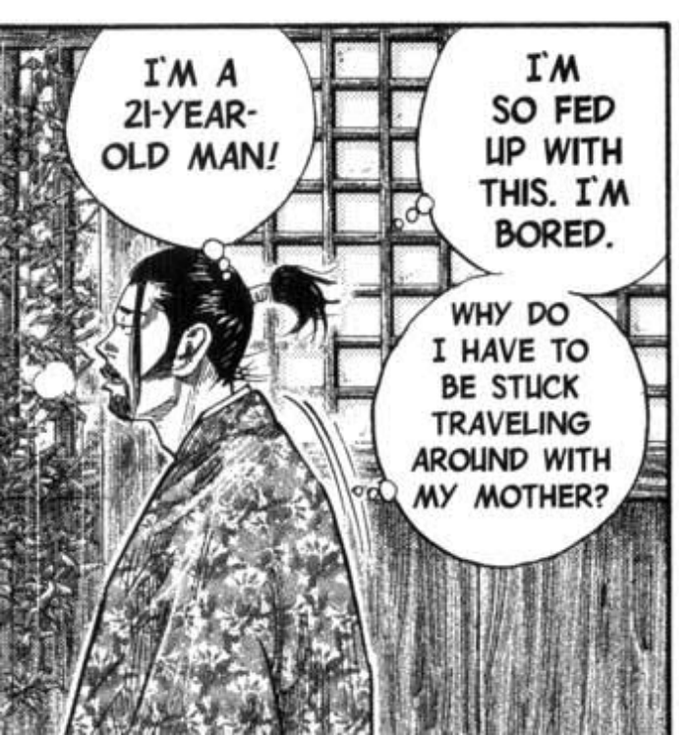
THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING I DOUBT WE'LL FIND HIM.

I'M GETTING TIRED OF WANDERING AROUND LIKE THIS!!
RUMORS ABOUT MUSASHI BROUGHT US ALL THE WAY TO ISE...

MOTHER ...
WHY DON'T WE SPLIT UP AND SEARCH?


WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?!

.....
WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME WE HAD THE CHANCE TO EXCHANGE CUPS OF NEW YEAR'S SAKE?
HMM HMM
THE NEW YEAR!!
IN TWO MONTHS IT WILL BE THE NEW YEAR.


I'M A 21-YEAR-OLD MAN!
I'M SO FED UP WITH THIS. I'M BORED.
WHY DO I HAVE TO BE STUCK TRAVELING AROUND WITH MY MOTHER?

WE THANK THEE.
MMBL MMBL
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE WE LAST CELEBRATED THE NEW YEAR TOGETHER.
WE THANK THEE FOR THIS OPPOR-TUNITY.

LOOKS LIKE HE'S TIRED OF PLAYING THE PART OF THE DEVOTED SON.
OH, BOY...
.....
KIKU...
I MISS OSAKA.
I WISH I COULD SHARE KIKU'S BED WITH HER JUST ONE MORE TIME.
HMM...

SOME DAY...
KOJIRŌ WILL DEFEAT MUSASHI!

SOME DAY I... WILL CUT DOWN MUSASHI!!
YOU HEAR THAT, UNCLE GON?
HMM...

WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

WELL SAID, MATAHACHI !!
YOU ARE THE RIGHTEOUS HEIR TO THE HON'IDEN FAMILY!!
YOU MUST KILL OUR DESPICABLE ENEMY!!
YOU MUST!!

COME, MOTHER...
FSH

KRIK
OUCH!!

IT'S SO COLD. I MUST HAVE PULLED A MUSCLE IN MY BACK. THE PAIN SEARS THROUGH TO MY STOMACH.
WHAT'S WRONG, GRANNY ?
OH, NO...

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME...
MATAHACHI'S CARRIED ME ON HIS BACK...?
OH, MATA-HACHI!
YOU'RE SO LIGHT, MOTHER!!
LIGHT AS A FEATHER!!
HMM...
KIKU...
HMM HMM
OH, KIKU...
I THINK HE DOESN'T REALLY GIVE A SECOND THOUGHT TO MUSASHI AND OTSŪ.
.....
MATA-HACHI...
URK
!

HE SAYS HE "LIVES BY THE SWORD," BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM DO ANY TRAINING.
WOULDN'T WANT TO HURT YOU.
OH...NO THANKS.
HOW ABOUT IT?
I MAY BE OLD, BUT I CAN STILL HELP YOU TRAIN.
WHY NOT?
HA HA HA! HE'S RIGHT, GON.
HOW COULD HIS REPUTATION HAVE GOTTEN SO GREAT?
...EVEN WHEN I SPAR.
I CAN'T HOLD BACK...
HA HA! WELL SAID.
HMPH!

GON...

YOUR DEVOTION TO YOUR SON'S BLINDING YOU...

YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED ONE BIT...
...BUT YOUR REPUTATION HAS...HOW *IS* THAT, MATAHACHI?
WHAT?!

WHAT?!
I JUST CANNOT SEE HOW THE REPUTATION OF "SASAKI KOJIRŌ" WOULD HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH MY NEPHEW.

FSHHH
FSHHH
UNCLE GON, HOW DARE YOU?
THE TALK AMONGST THE ERRANT SAMURAI IS THAT HE'S THE "RISING DRAGON IN THE WORLD OF SWORDSMANSHIP."
HE'S SUPPOSEDLY STRONG AS THE DEVIL.
YOUR MOTHER'S LOVE FOR YOU PREVENTS HER FROM SEEING THE TRUTH.
FSHHH
WHAT?!
I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
AND THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TALKING ABOUT MY NEPHEW?
THAT'S "SASAKI KOJIRŌ."
.....
MATAHACHI, HOW'D YOU GET TO BE SO FORMIDABLE WITHOUT EVER DOING ANY TRAINING?!

#107 The Road to Ise
MATAHACHI!!!!

GON, WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!
YOU MADE HIM RUN AWAY!!
YOU FOOL! YOU FOOL!!
THMP
AH, COME ON...
IT'S TOO SUSPICIOUS.
THMP
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
GO AFTER HIM!!

I'VE HAD ENOUGH!
I CAN'T DEAL WITH IT ANYMORE.
PLISH

I'M GOING MY OWN WAY!!
PLISH
I'M KOJIRŌ!
I'LL ALWAYS BE MATAHACHI IF I STAY WITH THEM.
PLISH

...!!
I'M SASAKI KOJIRŌ!!
FSSSHHH

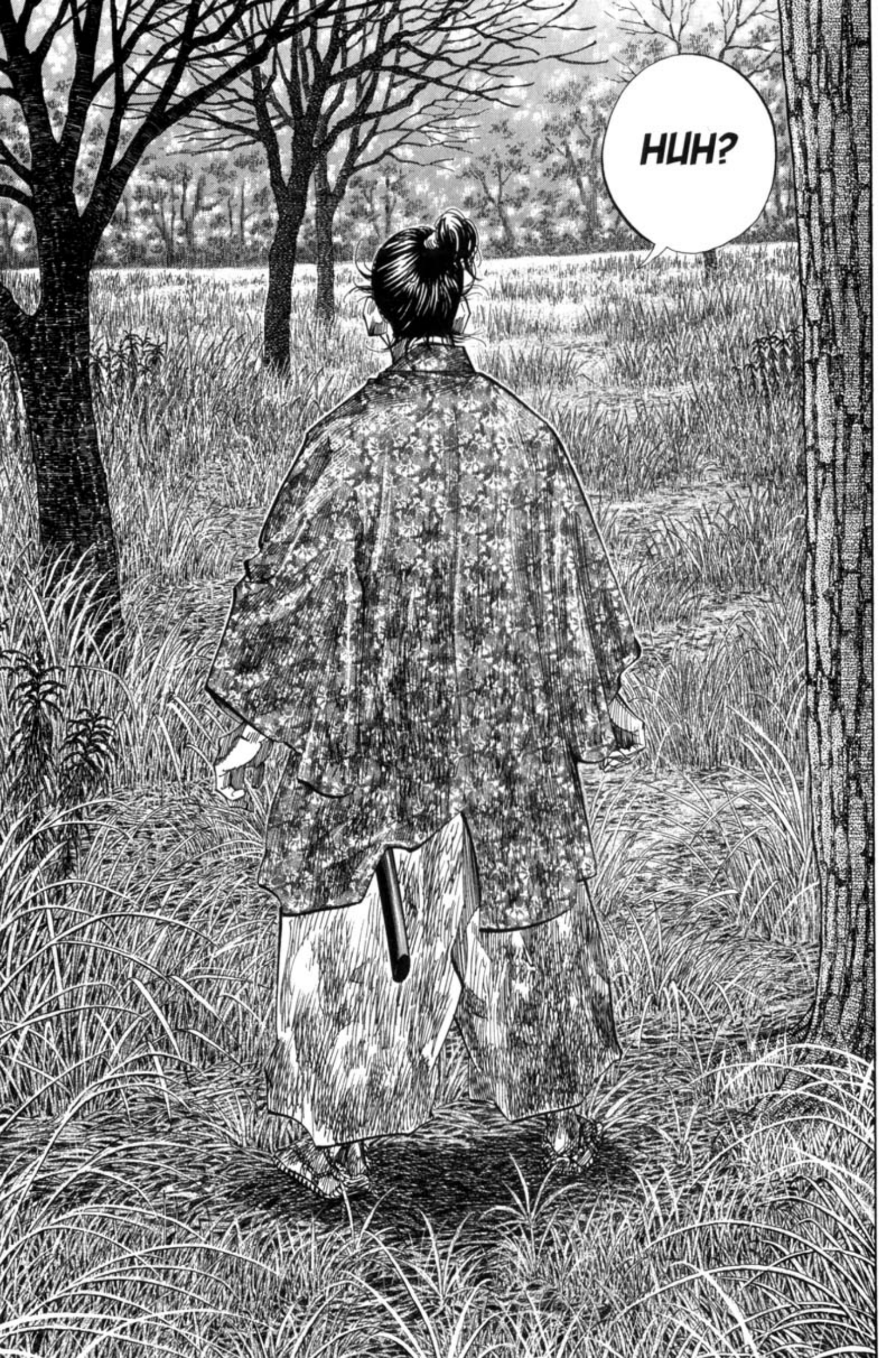
WHERE AM I?
I'M COMPLETELY LOST...
I'LL HAVE TO FIND AN INN BEFORE SUNSET...
RUSTLE
FICH
A WILD DOG?!
FSH
I'LL BE IN TROUBLE IF THERE ARE ANY WILD DOGS AROUND...
GASP!

!!

FICH

GULP
A GIRL...!!

A GIRL...


HUH?

SHE'S GONE...
?

THAT'S SO ODD. I THOUGHT I JUST SAW A GIRL OVER THERE...

GASP!

HAVE TO FIND AN INN!
I'M NOT CAMPING OUT TONIGHT.

HA HA!
BRRR
COULD IT HAVE BEEN A GHOST?

!!

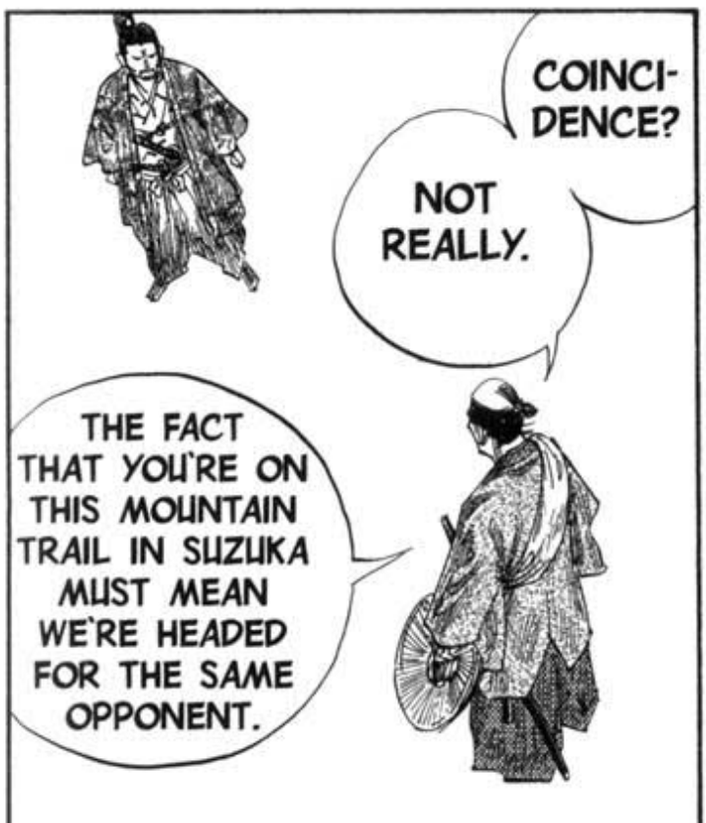
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO ENCOUNTER YOU HERE. HOW FORTUNATE.
SASAKI KOJIRŌ...

HEH HEH...
I WAS SO DISAPPOINTED YOU REFUSED MY CHALLENGE IN OSAKA.
WHO ARE YOU?

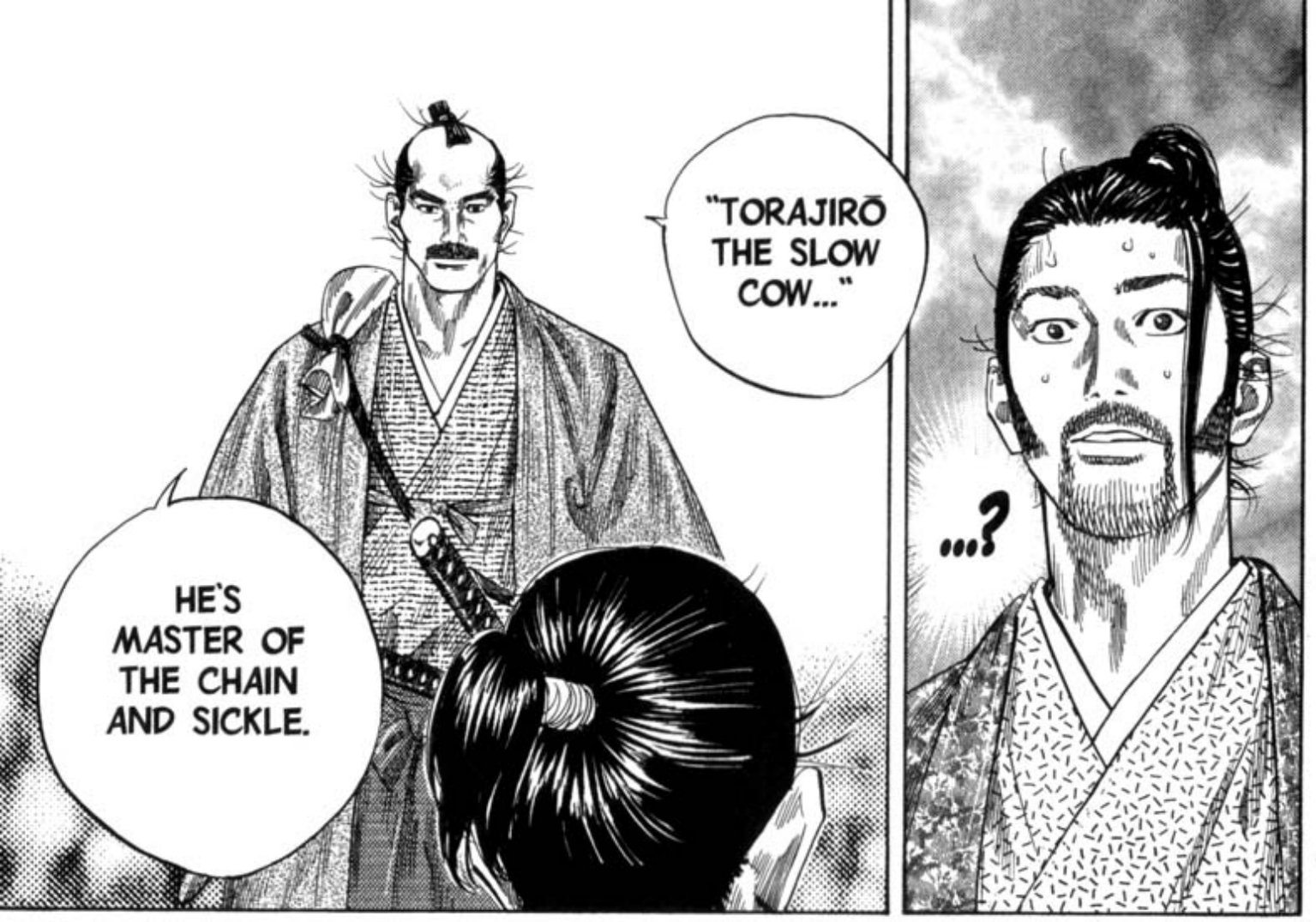
IT'S HIM.
OH, NO.

UH-OH!
WHA--?
ARGH!
NNGH!

ARGH!!


COINCI-DENCE?
NOT REALLY.
THE FACT THAT YOU'RE ON THIS MOUNTAIN TRAIL IN SUZUKA MUST MEAN WE'RE HEADED FOR THE SAME OPPONENT.

KAI SHŌJIRŌ IS MY NAME.
OH...
WHAT A COINCIDENCE.

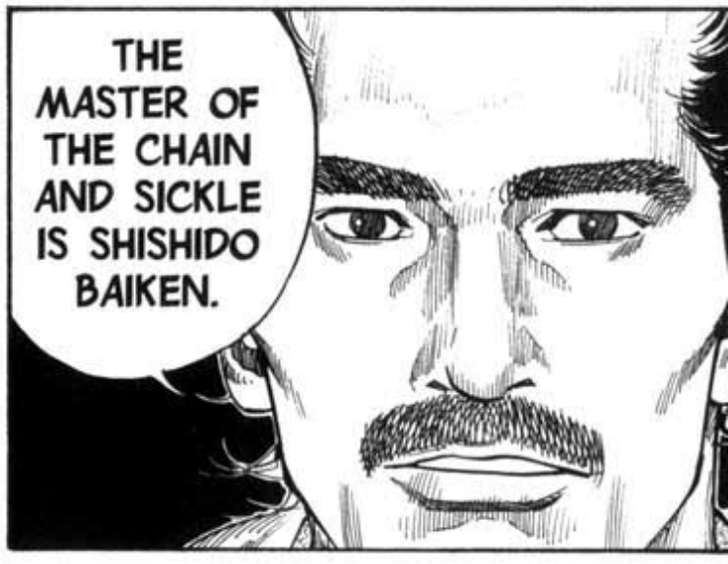

"TORAJIRŌ THE SLOW COW..."
...?
HE'S MASTER OF THE CHAIN AND SICKLE.

AN ERRANT SAMURAI WOULDN'T BE ON THIS TRAIL FOR ANY OTHER REASON.
YOU MUST BE SEEKING A MATCH WITH TORAJIRŌ.
NO POINT IN SEEKING OUT A WOODCUTTER, AFTER ALL.

.....
UH...
THAT'S RIGHT!!
I, SASAKI KOJIRŌ...
...AM HERE TO CHALLENGE TORAJIRŌ'S CHAIN AND SICKLE.
THUMP

HOW SILLY OF ME, I MADE A MISTAKE. *THIS* FELLOW IS TORAJIRŌ!
...?!

GANRYŪ ...
SASAKI KOJIRŌ...
OR SO YOU SAY...


THE MASTER OF THE CHAIN AND SICKLE IS SHISHIDO BAIKEN.

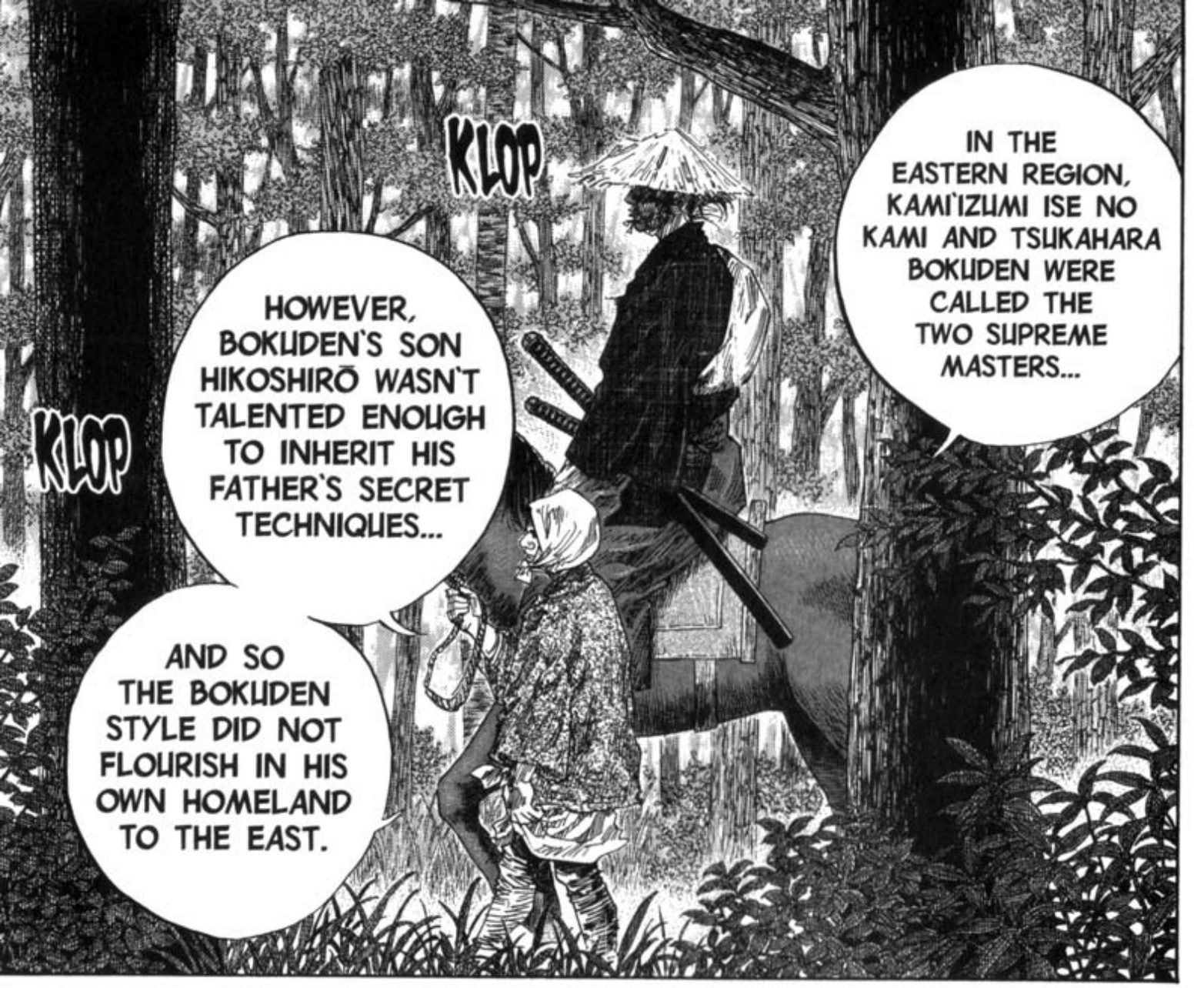
UH...
WELL...

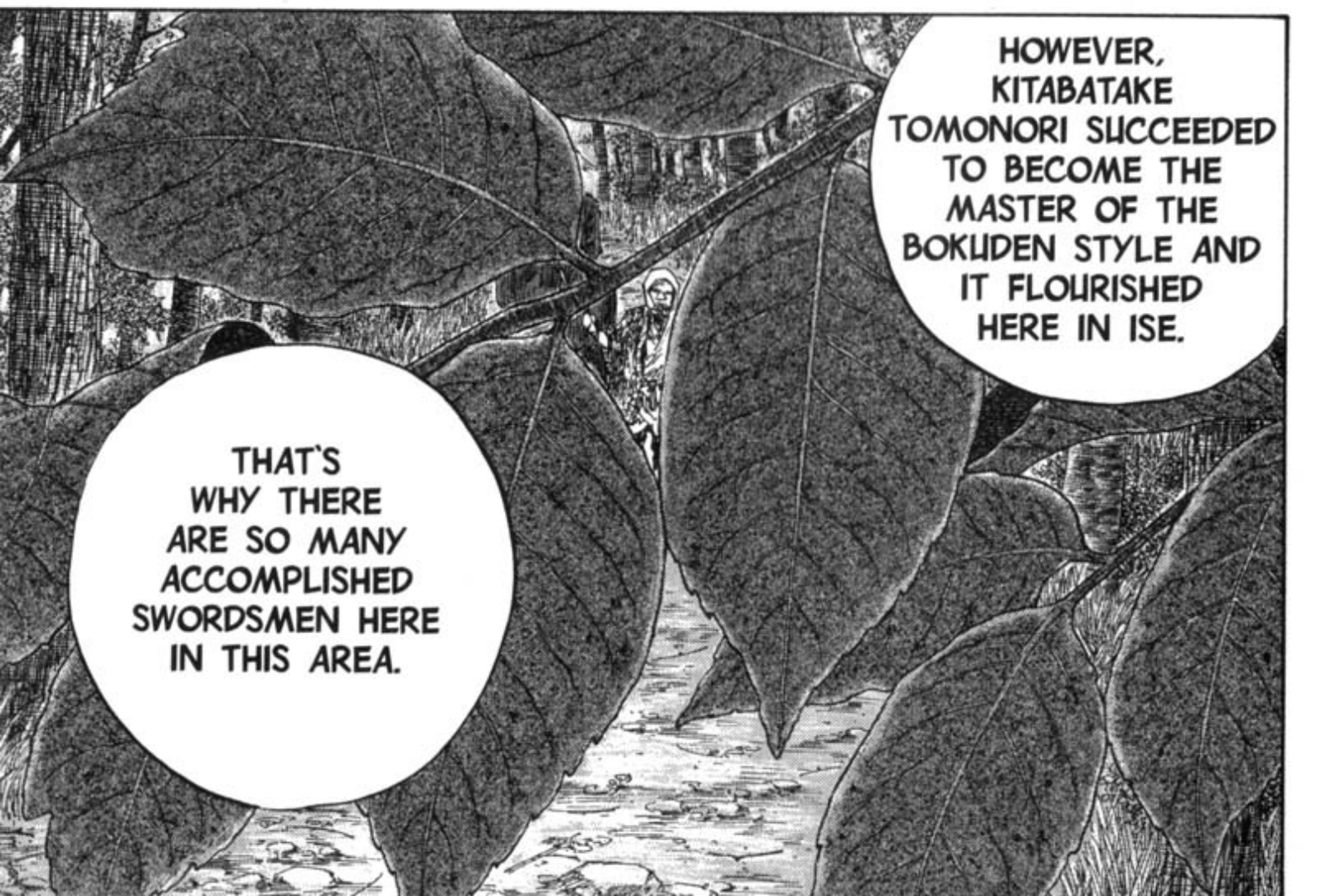
IMPOSTER...
DRAW YOUR SWORD.

A LONG TIME AGO, KITABATAKE TOMONORI GOVERNED ISE...
HE WAS A MASTER SWORDSMAN WHO LEARNED FROM THE GREAT TSUKAHARA BOKUDEN.
KLOP

THERE ARE MANY SWORDSMEN HERE IN ISE, SIR.
KLOP
KLOP

YOSHIOKA KEMPŌ OF KYOTO AND YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI OF YAMATO WERE THE GREAT MARTIAL ARTISTS OF THE EIROKU ERA...
KLOP


KLOP
KLOP
IN THE EASTERN REGION, KAMI'IZUMI ISE NO KAMI AND TSUKAHARA BOKUDEN WERE CALLED THE TWO SUPREME MASTERS...
HOWEVER, BOKUDEN'S SON HIKOSHIRŌ WASN'T TALENTED ENOUGH TO INHERIT HIS FATHER'S SECRET TECHNIQUES...
AND SO THE BOKUDEN STYLE DID NOT FLOURISH IN HIS OWN HOMELAND TO THE EAST.


HOWEVER, KITABATAKE TOMONORI SUCCEEDED TO BECOME THE MASTER OF THE BOKUDEN STYLE AND IT FLOURISHED HERE IN ISE.
THAT'S WHY THERE ARE SO MANY ACCOMPLISHED SWORDSMEN HERE IN THIS AREA.

HMM...

KLOP
.....
KLOP
KLOP

NO ONE WOULD EVEN THINK TO PUT THAT BEAT UP OLD HAT ON THEIR HEAD.
HIS HAIR IS A MESS. LOOKS LIKE HE'S NEVER WASHED IT BEFORE.

HE MUST BE COLD. HE'S NOT WEARING VERY MUCH...
HIS CLOTHES ARE IN TATTERS...

I'M A LITTLE WORRIED ...
WILL I ACTUALLY GET PAID?
CAN'T TELL IF HIS SKIN'S DARK FROM THE SUN...
OR IF IT'S JUST DIRT.
IS HE ALL RIGHT?
SIR, YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY TO UJI'I VILLAGE IN ANOGO?
THAT'S RIGHT.
WHAT TAKES YOU TO SUCH A REMOTE AREA?
FICH
.....
HAVE YOU HEARD OF A WEAPON CALLED THE CHAIN AND SICKLE?
FICH
THE CHAIN AND SICKLE?

I'M GOING TO MEET SOMEONE VERY STRONG.

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best-selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts award for Manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga for his work on *VAGABOND*. Most recently in 2002, *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka award for best manga. To date *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords at once—holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films that comprise *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003 NHK produced the historical period drama, *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this comic are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname, followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

Eiroku
Name of the era from 1558 to 1569.

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Kami'izumi Ise no Kami Hidetsuna (1508-1577(?))
The son of Kami'izumi Ise no Kami Hidetsugu, the lord of Kami'izumi Castle in present-day Gunma Prefecture. Hidetsuna founded the Shinkage-ryu Style of sword fighting and was such an accomplished swordsman and military strategist that he was once recruited by the famed Takeda Shingen. Hidetsuna, however, declined the post, stating that he preferred to travel throughout the land so that he might perfect his swordsmanship. Many notable figures studied under Hidetsuna including the esteemed Yagyu Munenori and Hozoin In'ei.

Kitabatake Tomonori (1528-1576)
Ruler of Ise, which is located in Mie Prefecture. Tomonori is also said to have been a master of the Kashima Shinto Ryu.

Sakushu
Located in modern day Okayama Prefecture.

Sangen'in Temple
One of the main subtemples of Daitokuji Temple in Kyoto.

The Sengoku Period and the Battle of Sekigahara
The Warring States or *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weaker and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of all of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating an orderly federation amongst the *daimyo,* and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its five-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

Tsukahara Bokuden (1489-1571)
Founder of the Kashima Shinto Ryu style of sword fighting. Bokuden was from the city of Kashima in modern day Ibaraki Prefecture and is famous for his sword training pilgrimages, which took him on travels throughout Japan.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key general's at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the *ometsuke*—responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evildoers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND* as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

editor's choice

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